

DEMO DVD! 6 MASSIVE PLAYABLE DEMOS!



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UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP 2

GET READY TO RUMBLE IN THE KING OF ALL DEATHMATCHES!

OFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN XBOX MAGAZINE

EXCLUSIVE REVIEW!

KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC 2

BETTER THAN THE ORIGINAL? TURN TO PAGE 062 NOW TO FIND OUT!

**Quit your day job!
Start a Fight Club!**

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Keeping terrorists at bay!

Rainbow Six 4: Lockdown is bigger, faster and smarter than ever!

COMPLETE GUIDE!

HALO 2 STEP-BY-STEP

AWESOME TRICKS AND SECRET TACTICS YOU'VE JUST GOT TO TRY!

6 EXCLUSIVE PLAYABLE DEMOS!

- BURNOUT 3
- CONKER: LIVE & RELOADED
- THE INCREDIBLES
- PRINCE OF PERSIA 2
- AND LOADS MORE!

No disc? Ask your newsagent!

HEADLINE NEWS: XBOX 2 RUMOURS, FAR CRY INSTINCTS, COMMANDOS GOES FIRST-PERSON, FIFA ON THE STREET...



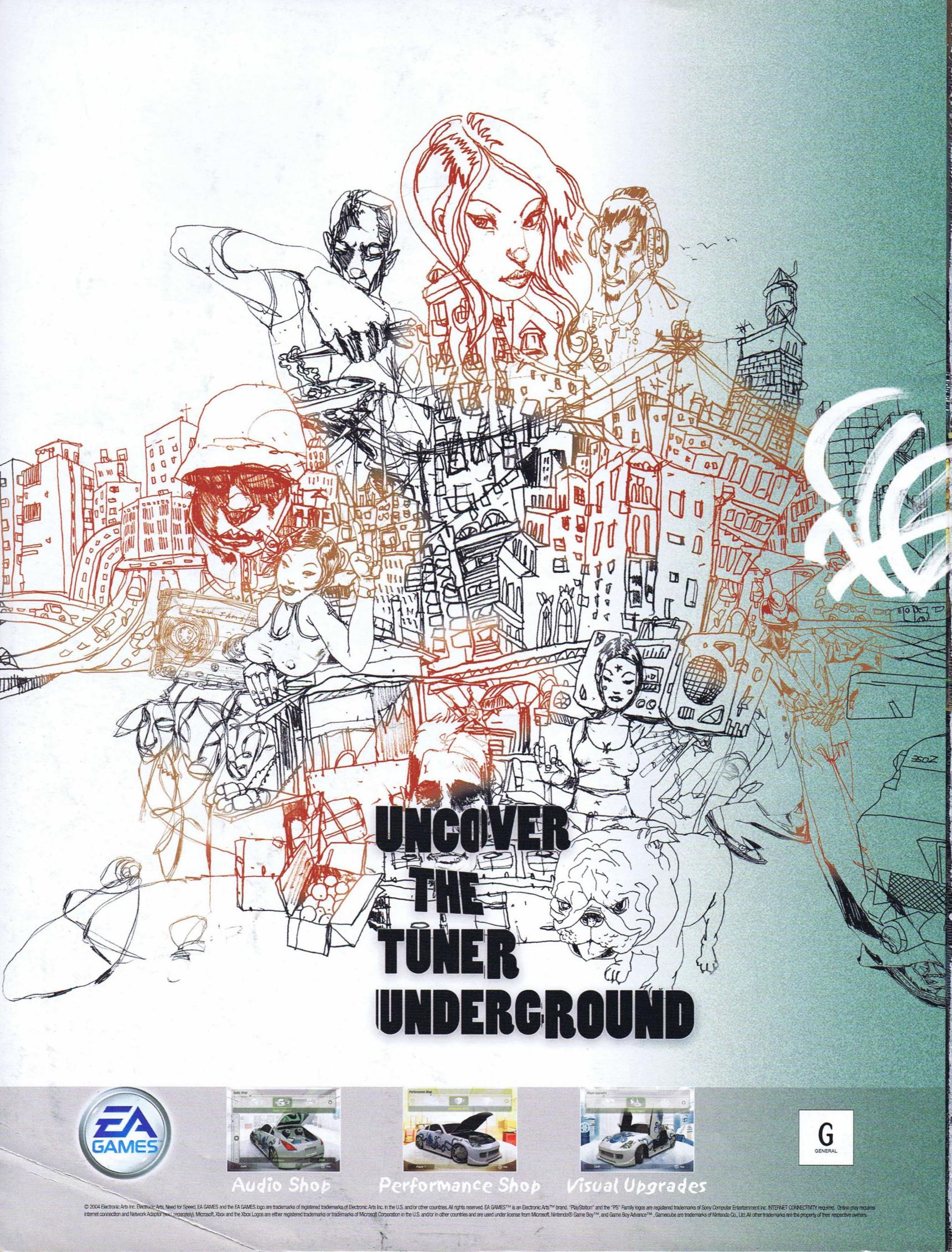
DERWENT HOWARD

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36

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UNCOVER THE TUNER UNDERGROUND



Audio Shop



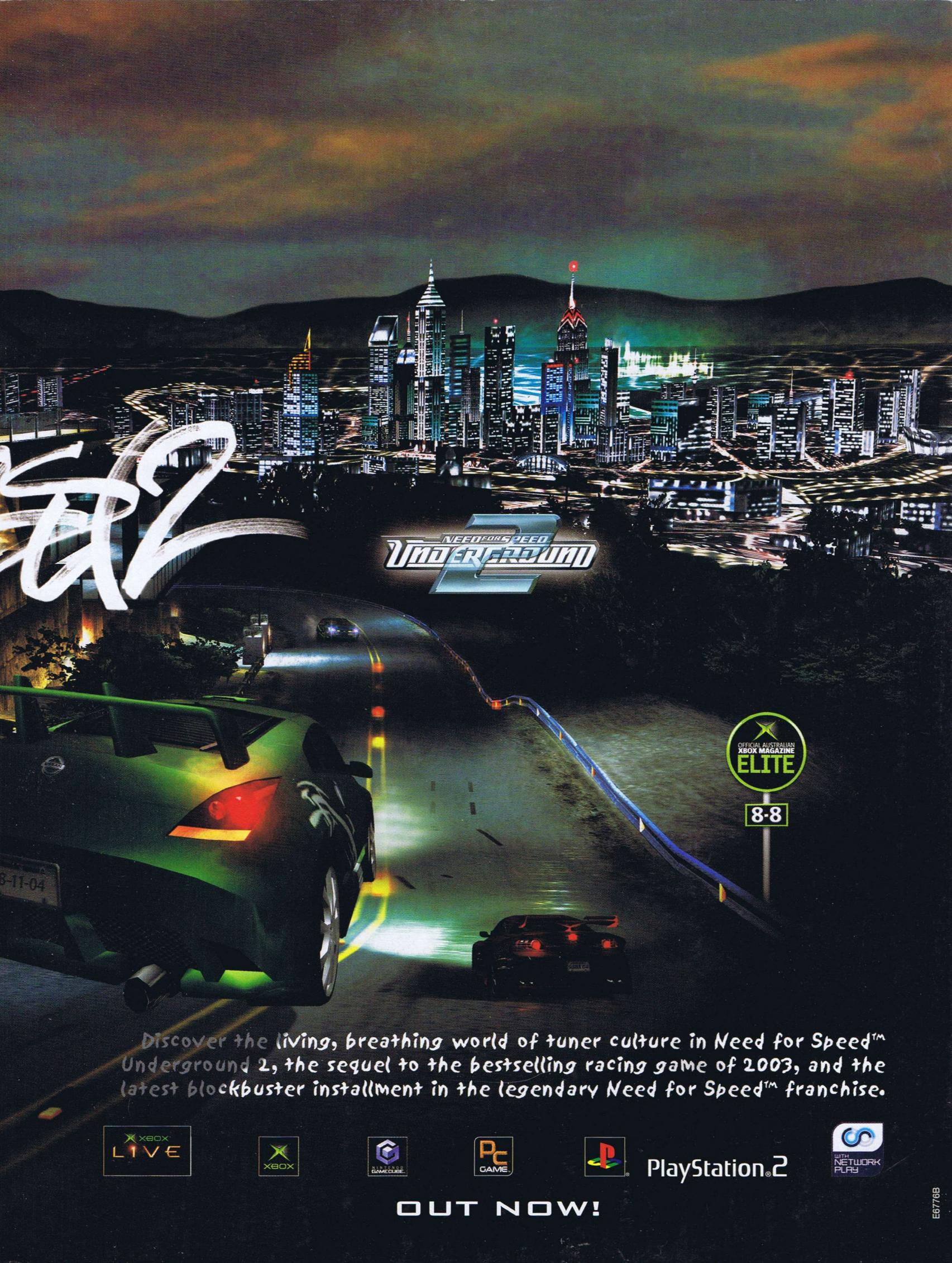
Performance Shop



Visual Upgrades



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Discover the living, breathing world of tuner culture in *Need for Speed™ Underground 2*, the sequel to the bestselling racing game of 2003, and the latest blockbuster installment in the legendary *Need for Speed™* franchise.



PlayStation.2



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Game On



\$398.95 each

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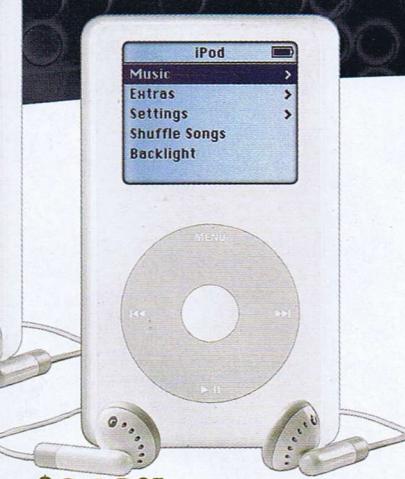
All the best features of the iPod, just smaller, lightweight durable anodized aluminium body. Firewire connection. Compatible with both PC and Mac. Available in various colours. M9160X/A



\$498.95

iPod 20GB MP3 Player with Click Wheel.

The super slim iPod defines what a music player should be. Compatible with both PC and Mac. The 20Gb iPod holds up to 5000 songs. M9282X/A



\$648.95

iPod 40GB MP3 Player With Click Wheel.

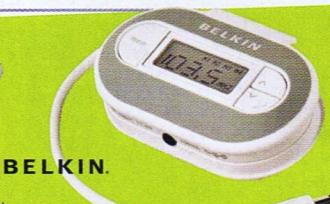
The 40Gb iPod holds up to 10,000 songs. M9268X/A

BELKIN.

\$39.95

iPod Mini Aluminium Hard Case.

F8E567-APL
iPod not included.



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F8V3080-APL

BELKIN.

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Belkin Battery Backup Kit for iPod.

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BELKIN.

\$189.95

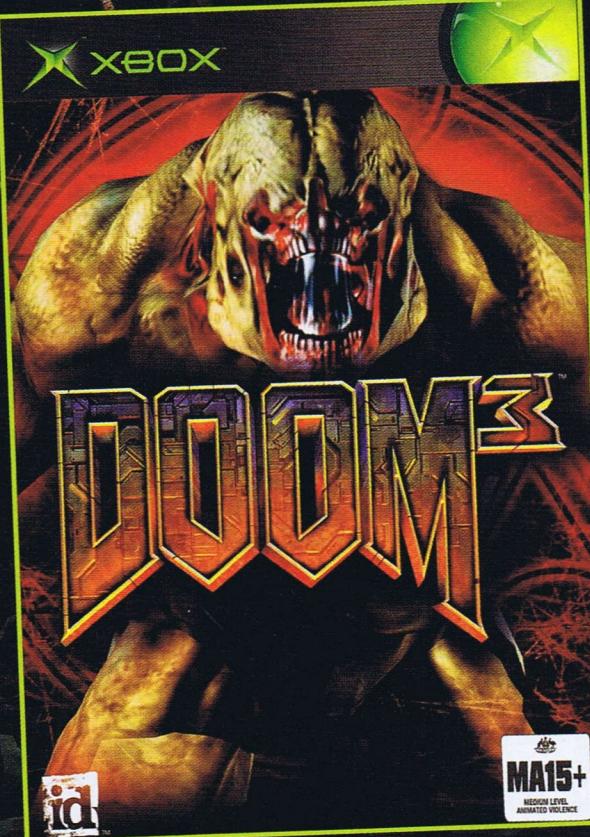
iPod USB Digital Camera Link.

BELKIN.

\$189.95

iPod USB Digital Camera Link.

With this portable innovation you'll easily transfer thousands of digital images from your camera to your iPod, and free up disk space to take more pictures. F8E477. iPod not included.



\$10 DOWN
\$10 OFF *1



DOOM 3

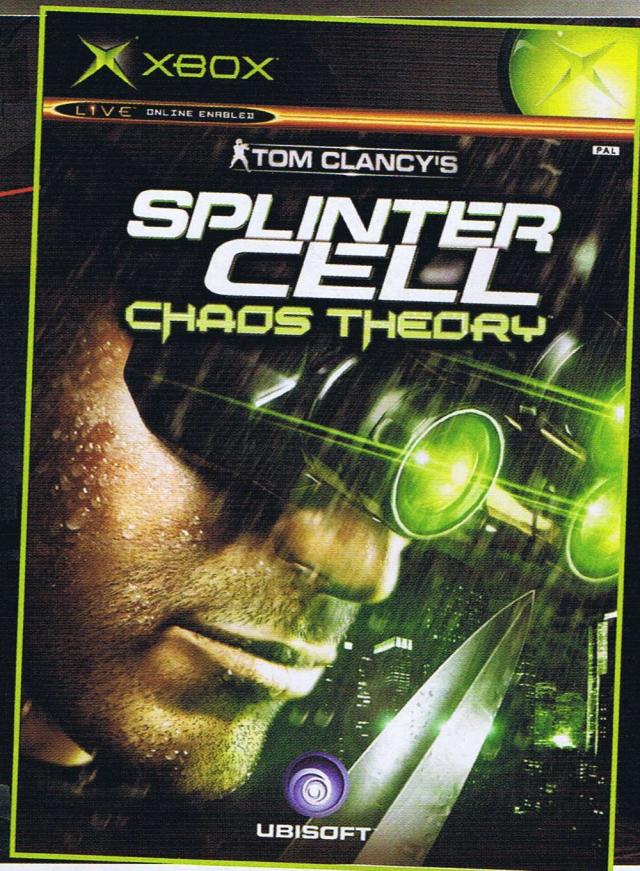
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Doom 3 Xbox™ (MA15+). XBDOOM3

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The welcome mat:



Ready for more?

I KNOW THAT MOST of you have probably gone on that well-deserved Christmas splurge and spent most of your hard-earned cash on games, but hopefully you'll have left enough money aside for the second round of big releases. Yes, that's right, there are a lot more blockbusters on the way, and they're coming sooner than you think.

You see, most game publishers operate to a financial deadline of March 31, so while it seems as though a lot of them are faffing about (one of the more useful phrases I've learnt this year) as they delay games like *Splinter Cell 3*, *Doom 3* and *Forza Motorsports* to the first quarter of 2005, they're actually aiming for that March 31 deadline so that they have more money on the books to report.

And what does that mean for you? More Triple A games to buy, like *Knights of the Old Republic 2* (read our exclusive review at page 062) and *Unreal Championship 2* (see page 056).

2005 will be a year full of promise and expectation for Xbox. The release of *Halo 2* back in November marked the beginning of a new

generation of top-quality games being added to the Xbox's portfolio. Whether you're one of the many Australians who joined the Xbox gaming fold this holiday season or an old hand who can't get enough of this thrillride, you're part of an enormous family of enthusiasts who understand the joys of having the best games and the best technology sitting right under their televisions. Happy New Year, my fellow Xbox fans, and here's to another year of quality entertainment.

Happy gaming!

KEVIN CHEUNG
EDITOR, OFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN
XBOX MAGAZINE

WIN A KINGLY PRIZE PACK!

THANKS TO Atari and Buena Vista Home Video, we've got five King Arthur DVD prize packs to give away, including the Director's Cut DVD, a polo shirt, hat, waist bag,

watch and a copy of the game. To enter, go to the OXM section of www.derwenthoward.com.au and fill in your details. The closing date for the comp is January 25, 2005.



**OFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN
XBOX MAGAZINE**

OFFICIAL

» THE BEST XBOX NEWS AND REVIEWS

PLAYABLE

» THE EXCLUSIVE SOURCE FOR PLAYABLE XBOX DEMOS

FIRST

» NEWS, PREVIEWS & REVIEWS BEFORE ANYONE ELSE

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU

» THE OFFICIAL Australian Xbox Magazine is written by a group of experienced gamers who've spent their lives playing games. We believe that games are the most exciting form of entertainment there is. This magazine will reflect that at all times.

» WE BELIEVE THAT the arrival of Xbox represents one of the most important developments in video games. Xbox will not 'kill' the PS2 or GameCube - and as gamers we wouldn't want it to. However, the power and technological innovation offered by Microsoft's new machine will result in better games and more choice for Xbox owners.

» BEING THE OFFICIAL Australian Xbox Magazine means that we are in the best position to give impartial, honest review scores. We don't do any deals to get access to finished games. As a result, we're in the best possible position to give you what you deserve - balanced, objective and accurate reviews on which to base your buying decisions.

» MICROSOFT HAS no access to, or influence over, the Official Australian Xbox Magazine. The company's involvement ends once it has made available to us materials we need for the magazine, and it will only read our reviews when you do.

» HOWEVER, BECAUSE we are the official magazine, we have unprecedented access to the newest Xbox games in development and the people making them. Our coverage of forthcoming titles will take you closer than ever before to the most exciting new games. We will talk to the developers and publish the best new screenshots before anyone else.

» OUR OFFICIAL STATUS allows us to get closer to every Xbox story, rooting out the truth from the rumours and speculation. Because we can go directly to the people involved, you can be assured that every story in the magazine will be accurate and truthful.

» THE OFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN XBOX MAGAZINE is part of a huge network of games journalists across the globe, ready to visit games developers wherever they are and report exclusively for the Official Xbox Magazine World Network.

» WE BELIEVE that the readers of the Official Australian Xbox Magazine are one of our most important assets. While it's our job to provide you with the demos, news, previews and reviews you need, we want to be a place where your opinions and expertise can be shared with the new Xbox community.

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On the Disc...



WELCOME TO Issue 36's Playable Game Disc, the only source available for playable demos, movies, downloads and more for your Xbox.

This month's disc is loaded with the hottest titles you've been dying to see, starting with an Xbox Live demo of what's sure to be the arcade racer of the year, *Burnout 3: Takedown*. This is followed by a healthy round of biffo with the tie-in to this holiday season's hottest cinema ticket, *The Incredibles*.

Fans of *Conker's Bad Fur Day* on N64 will be pleased to test the demo of Rare's long-awaited follow-up, *Conker: Live & Reloaded*. It's simple blast 'em up fun, but it looks pretty fantastic!

Also on the disc is a taste of the new (and darker) *Prince of Persia*, the mystical slash 'em up action of *Otogi 2* and a nice, laid-back round of golf with *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2005*.

Want more? How about a swag of demo movies of *Project Snowblind*, *Unreal Championship 2* and *Area 51*? Or save-games for *The Sims Bustin' Out*, *Need For Speed Underground 2* and *Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy*?

There's hours and hours of fun to be had on your Xbox. Enjoy the disc, and we'll see you next issue!



↑ The Xbox controller is your gateway to the Official Australian Xbox Magazine Game Disc. Use the directional pad or left thumbstick to highlight the menus in the right-hand window and press the A button to select. The B button returns you to the previous menu and the White button zooms in for an extreme close-up of the screen.

Burnout 3: Takedown



Reviewed: Issue 32 Score: 9.2
Players: N/A Live: 2-6 players

WHAT COULD BE more satisfying than sideswiping a hot-rod show-off into a concrete pillar? *Burnout 3: Takedown* gives you the chance to do just that, and five other online players the opportunity to do just the same to you!

This is an online-enabled demo so you'll need to be on Xbox Live to play it. Sign in to your account in the usual way and shimmy down to the game lobby to find a game. From here, select Optimatch to search for games with your favourite options.

Alternatively, set up your own game using the Create Match option. This opens a lobby for up to five other players to join you. As the host, you have

to wait for enough players to join and press Start when the Press Start icon appears. You can choose between two game types: Race and Road Rage.

Race is a standard three-lap challenge where every player must attempt to cross the finishing line first. Road Rage divides the players into two teams - red and blue. The red team must cross the finishing line before the blue team have chance to hit them all with takedowns. To score a takedown, crash into your opponent, making him slam into a wall or another vehicle. It's even possible to score signature takedowns at certain points on the circuit. Force another driver into a concrete pillar to get the pillar driller takedown.

Check out your opponent's stats before starting a match. By selecting their name and pressing A in the lobby, you can see their wins and ranking.

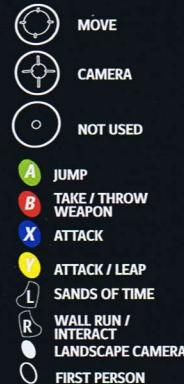


Prince of Persia: Warrior Within

Reviewed: Issue 34 Score: 9.4
Players: 1

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, the Prince of Persia defied his fate and was cursed by the Sands of Time. A great demon known as Dahaka now pursues him relentlessly across land and sea. The only way to stop this ancient nemesis is to travel back in time and prevent the Sands of Time from ever existing.

On your way to the mysterious Island, you're ambushed by a legion of Raiders and Executioners led by the evil mistress Shahdlee. Follow the on-screen instructions to execute special attacks and



deadly finishing moves. It's better to kill an enemy with a flourish because slicing them into pieces releases more of the Sands of Time.

Collecting the Sands fills up your time control meter. You can rewind time once for each yellow moon in this meter. If you get skewered in a pit of spikes, hold the L trigger and rewind time to the point before you slipped up.

An exciting new feature is the ability to dual-wield. Walk over any discarded weapon and press B to take it. You can now execute an entirely new set of combos. Once you're finished with the second weapon, hold down B for a few seconds and release it to throw it at the nearest creature.

The Incredibles

Reviewed: Issue 35 Score: 7.0
Players: 1

IN THIS TRIAL version of *The Incredibles*, you must infiltrate Syndrome's robot arena and destroy the giant bionic guardian at the end. You'll have to batter guards, smash down walls and even pilot a flying saucer to make it through.

A great technique is to grab a guard by pressing B and then throw him like a projectile at other enemies by pressing B or Y. Alternatively, throw him into a force field generator or even into a stack of explosive crates. Piloting the flying saucer is automatic - just aim the laser gun. Take out the three laser defence turrets to proceed.



↑ Chuck him into a crate of explosives!

The robot guardian is one tough cookie. His armour is too strong for normal attacks. Wait until he fires out a green bomb, then pick it up and throw it right back where it came from. Three direct hits should be enough to destroy the metallic menace. Just make sure you let go of the bombs before their timers tick down. You don't want to end up with scorched fingers.



Conker: Live & Reloaded

Reviewed: Coming soon

Score: TBA

Players: 1

CONKER IS THE only red squirrel left in the world, and he's been 'drafted' into an army of grey rodents. Charging up the beach toward the Tediz' stronghold looks like a suicide mission, and it probably is.

You won't last two seconds in the Tediz' firing line. Take cover behind a metal barrier the moment your foes start shooting. Wait until they pause to reload, then dash across to the next safe haven.

Reach the bunker safely and you can access Conker's Uzi by pressing B. Shoot the lock off the door and storm inside, taking down any Tediz in

your way. Zoom in for a more accurate shot by clicking the Right thumbstick and reload using X.

Tediz aren't the only hazard you'll face. The infrared laser grids trigger a deadly explosive booby trap. Press B to put away your gun, and hold down the Right trigger to crawl underneath them. Alternatively, press A to jump, and press A again mid-hop to use your tail like a helicopter. The extra elevation should get you over the laser beams.

At the end of the mission, Conker goes head to head with the Tediz' Casualty Dept. Strafe left and right to avoid their scalpels and syringes, all the time plugging away with your Uzi. With the Tediz defeated, it's your chance to save the last remaining grey squirrel from a fate worse than extinction.

- MOVE
- AIM / CLICK
- NOT USED
- JUMP
- ACTION
- RELOAD
- NOT USED
- LOOK AROUND
- CROUCH / FIRE
- NOT USED
- NOT USED

Otogi 2: Immortal Warriors

Reviewed: Coming soon

Score: TBA

Players: 1

WHEN WE LAST saw Raikoh, he had returned to his lonely grave after vanquishing the evil Michizane. Sadly, a few years later, the great seal keeping the demon world in check was deliberately broken. Five warriors - Kintoki, Tsuna, Sadamitsu, Suetake and Seime - selflessly gave up their lives to resurrect Raikoh and fight at his side as the living dead.

You can select any of the six Immortal Warriors in this awesome trial version. Each one has unique combo attacks, varying strength and endurance and belongs to a different house of magic. Casting spells is the most effective way of exorcising demons. Hold

down X to charge up your magical attack for greater damage. Unfortunately, this reduces your MP meter, reducing the amount of time you have left to complete your mission.

If your MP or HP meters expire, you'll automatically fail the mission. There are two ways to top up your meters: smash buildings to uncover power-ups and exorcise demons on a regular basis.

In the first mission, Byakko Palace, the headless horseman Masakado is wreaking havoc. Destroy his three defensive towers by smashing enemies into them with heavy attacks. You'll then have to take on Masakado in a final duel.

The other mission in this trial version is The Water's Edge. Here, you must destroy any four of the six giant water spiders.

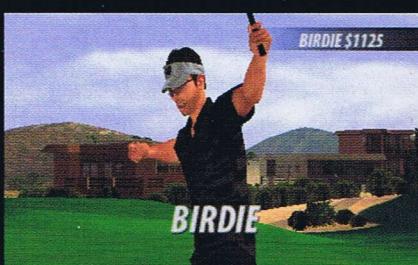
- MOVE
- CAMERA
- NOT USED
- JUMP
- LIGHT ATTACK
- MAGIC
- HEAVY ATTACK
- LOCK-ON
- DASH
- NOT USED
- NOT USED

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2005

Reviewed: Issue 33

Score: 8.7

Players: 1



Pheew! Get me the Rexona!

- SWING CLUB / SPIN
- SWING CLUB / SPIN
- MOVE AIMING MARKER
- CHANGE CAMERA
- ZOOM TO TARGET
- CHANGE SHOT TYPE
- RESET TARGETING MARK
- SWITCH CLUBS
- SWITCH CLUBS
- BOOST / TIGER VISION
- CONTROL / BALL POSITION

THIS DEMO INCLUDES four tricky holes from four courses, not to mention a taste of the new Game Face 2, Legend Match and Tiger Proofing modes.

The holes on offer in Play Golf and Legend Match are Sherwood #15, Colonial #15, Edgewood #18, Greek Isles #1. You have the option to play them one after the other, or just jump straight into your favourite. Play Golf is a practice run; Legend Match pits you against Jack Nicklaus.

Don't worry if you drop a shot against the expert player, Tiger Vision can help you catch up. When going for an extremely long putt, press and hold down the White button. A small yellow dot will appear on the green, indicating the precise spot where your putting marker should go. You can only do this once a game though, so use it wisely.

Game Saves

NO BOSS TOO tough, no mission too impossible. Play: More is determined to crack open every Xbox title and bring you the hottest downloadable game saves. This month, we've got saves for the following five games...

Need for Speed Underground

Game 100 per cent complete - all cars and tracks unlocked. Includes two custom cars based on the *Fast and the Furious* movie.

The Sims: Bustin' Out

Bust Out mode 100 per cent complete with all items of furniture unlocked.

Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy

Eight saves at points throughout the game, right up to the last boss. All FMVs and game modes unlocked.

Spider-Man 2

Halfway through the game with loads of hero points and abilities unlocked.

Driver 3

A massive 21 replays to watch. All levels and cars unlocked.

How To...

Download your Game Saves

SAVES CAN BE found in the Game Saves and Extra Content menus. Highlight one and press the A button to download it. If the save is greyed out and can't be selected, you already have a save of this type on your Xbox hard disk. Simply go into the memory screen on your Xbox Dashboard, delete the save and, the next time you load the game disc, the option will reappear in white.

PROBLEMS WITH YOUR DISC?

If your Official Australian Xbox Magazine demo DVD is faulty, send it back to us at Disc Returns, Official Australian Xbox Magazine, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction NSW 1355, and we'll replace the disc without delay. Don't forget to include your postal address so we can send it back to you!



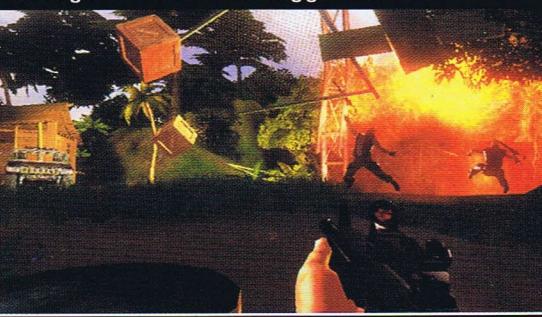
052 RAINBOW SIX 4

Exclusive new screens and info of the Xbox's next big tactical shooter!



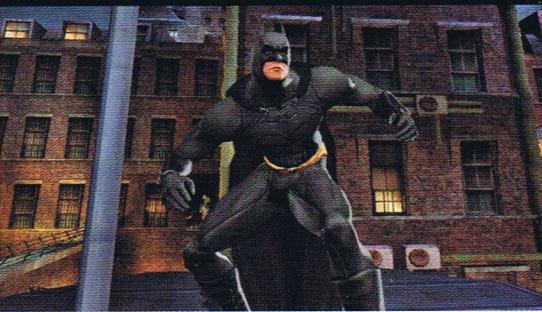
012 FIRST LOOK: FAR CRY INSTINCTS

It was great on PC and it's looking good for Xbox.



014 FIRST LOOK: BATMAN BEGINS

The Dark Knight gets back to basics.



016 MECHASSAULT 2

Exclusive interview with the creators.



056 UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP 2

Microsoft's loss is Midway's gain - check out the hot new screens!

062 KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC 2

Exclusive First Review - find out if it's more fun to play on the side of evil!



CRITICAL STRIKE

024 DOOM 3

Tim Willits reveals more about the Xbox version of Doom 3!



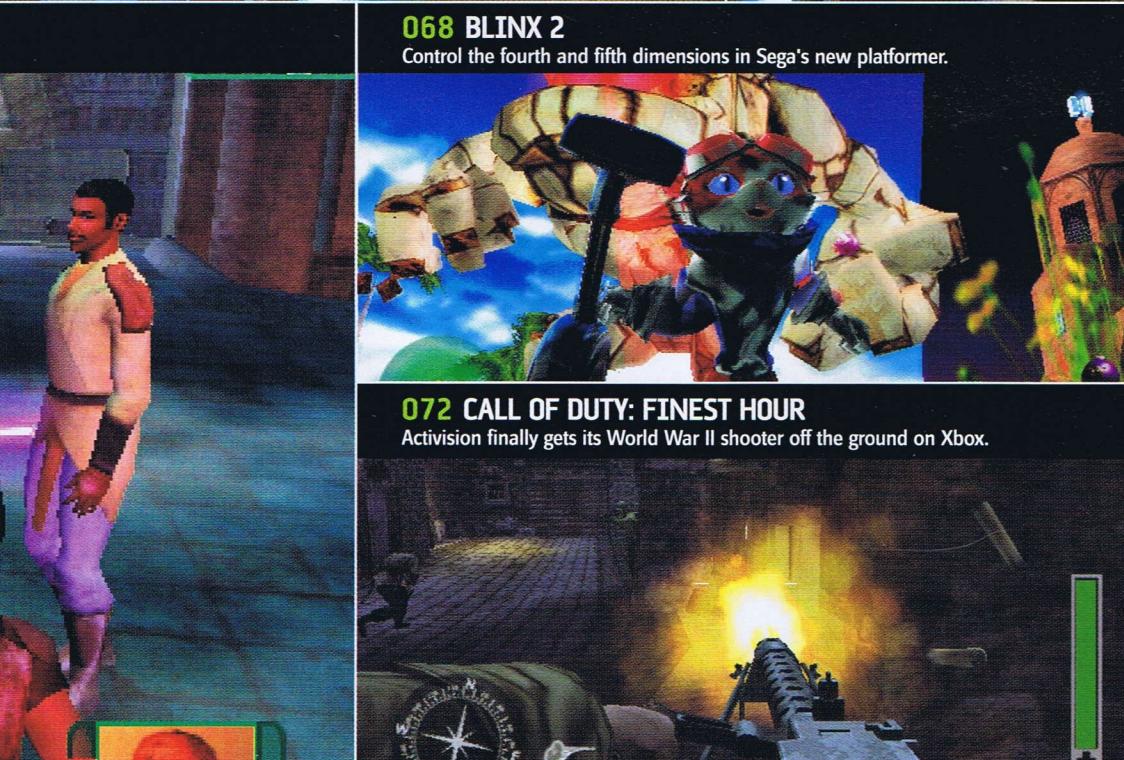
090 HALO 2 PLAYGUIDE

In six pages, we'll show you how to play like a champ in *Halo 2*.



068 BLINX 2

Control the fourth and fifth dimensions in Sega's new platformer.



FIRST LOOK

014 FAR CRY INSTINCTS
016 BATMAN BEGINS

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- » CONKER: LIVE & RELOADED
- » TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005
- » OTOGI 2: IMMORTAL WARRIORS
- » PRINCE OF PERSIA 2
- » THE INCREDIBLES
- » PROJECT SNOWBLIND
- » GOLDENEYE: ROGUE AGENT
- » AND LOADS MORE!

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DISC 36 GUIDE STARTS PAGE 008

ONE MAN. MANY WEAPONS. INFINITE DESTRUCTION.

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MECHASSAULT 2 *Lone Wolf*

In MechAssault 2 you are one of the last members of the Wolf Dragoons and you are no longer confined to a BattleMech®. Scale a wall or jack a BattleMech with the BattleArmor, jump into a tank or fly the VTOL to carry supplies into battle. Galactic supremacy is the reward in Conquest mode on Xbox Live, as you enter a persistent online world. Join one of five houses on 45 planets and with your clan attempt to conquer the solar system. With new enemies, new weapons and new environments, the choice is yours. MechAssault 2. The biggest battle just got bigger.

xbox.com/mechassault2



it's good to play together

XBOX LIVE

First Look

World-exclusive scoops of the newest Xbox games in development

FAR CRY INSTINCTS

Trouble in paradise? You bet. We're loving it

P014

BATMAN BEGINS

Come back Bruce, all is forgiven. The Bat gets dark

P016



↑ Just shoot the barrels of petrol and be done with it.

Far Cry Instincts

Not so much Paradise Lost, as Paradise Blown To Smithereens

Dev: Ubisoft/Crytek

Pub: Ubisoft

Release: Autumn 2005

Live: 2-16 players

Players: 1-2

WITH A NAME like Jack Carver you just know he's an ex-Marine, now 'off the grid'. He's probably a cigar-chewing misogynist who spends his days staring into a Jack Daniel's bottle, but by golly, when his country needs him, you can bet your last Yankee buck he'll begrudgingly stand up and fight. Videogame clichés - don't you love 'em?

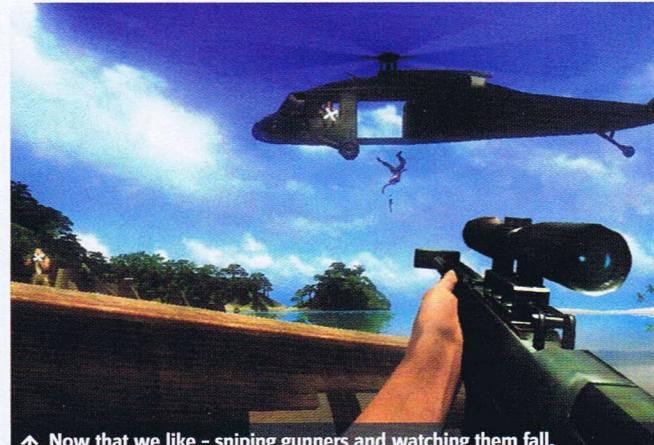
Well, with a fishing rod in hand and only the waves and seagulls for company, Carver's history is long buried. Running charter boats for tourists, he ekes out a living and keeps himself to himself... until a feisty young female journalist shows up and asks to be taken to a mysterious island. You know, the one where local people fear to tread and the volcano has a skull carved into its side.

When the dame goes missing and his boat is sunk, Carver is trapped on the island. This is where *Far Cry* explodes open, revealing itself to be an FPS in a sandbox - a completely free-roaming beast that will let us complete missions and kill enemies exactly how we'd like. There's even going to be a level editor especially modified from the PC version that will let us create and upload our own islands to Live. Whether we want to go in all guns blazing or divide and conquer the enemy, it'll be entirely up to us. Objects will also be fully interactive, so we'll be able to off a bad guy while setting a diversion.

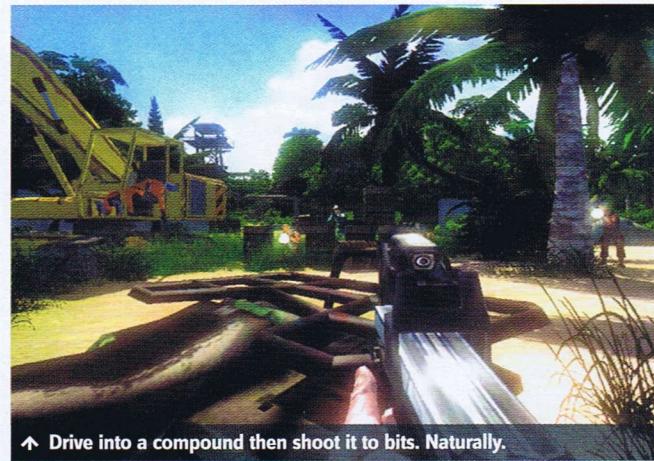
Simply lure him to an oil barrel by way of a few well placed stones, shoot it when he's close by and have everyone swarm over to see his charred body.

Carver will also be able to sneak under the island's huts. He can crawl into the floor space, peek through the floorboards, then send a volley of fire up into people above him. The idea is to survive and kill by any means necessary, so if this means scouting out compounds, popping heads with a sniper rifle, or setting devious traps, we'll be able to do it. Whether it's setting tripwires by ammo crates or tying back branches to form branch whips, the environment is our main weapon. Carver is like a modern MacGyver, minus the mullet.

News about Live content is also something to get excited about, because *Far Cry* offers not only the chance to upload and play our own maps, but for at least 16 players to slug it out over half a dozen modes. We say at least 16 because at the time of writing word had it that developer Crytek was trying to squeeze in that elusive 24-player option. Once an online world is created we'll then be able to chuck in any number of vehicles and go at it like madmen. We saw one jeep dart off a cliff only to collide with a chopper that was hovering over the gorge; and if we weren't witnessing Apache craft scorching the ground with lead, we were watching Hummers plunge into the water on top of Carver's dingy. In fact, if you can think it, word has it that you can do it. Better whip out those old Boy Scout annuals - something tells us we'll be rubbing two sticks together again some time soon.



↑ Now that we like - sniping gunners and watching them fall.



↑ Drive into a compound then shoot it to bits. Naturally.

Branching Out

Learning how to use the environment to your advantage...



↑ Tie a spiked branch back, Rambo-style.



↑ Along comes Dopey and hits the wire.



↑ The spikes plunge into his soft body.



↑ "Psst! Hey, does it hurt?"

Bonus info

DOH!

Be careful, once you lay a trap you might get caught in it yourself. If no one sets it off and you forget about it, you could end up killing yourself.

LIVE TRAPS

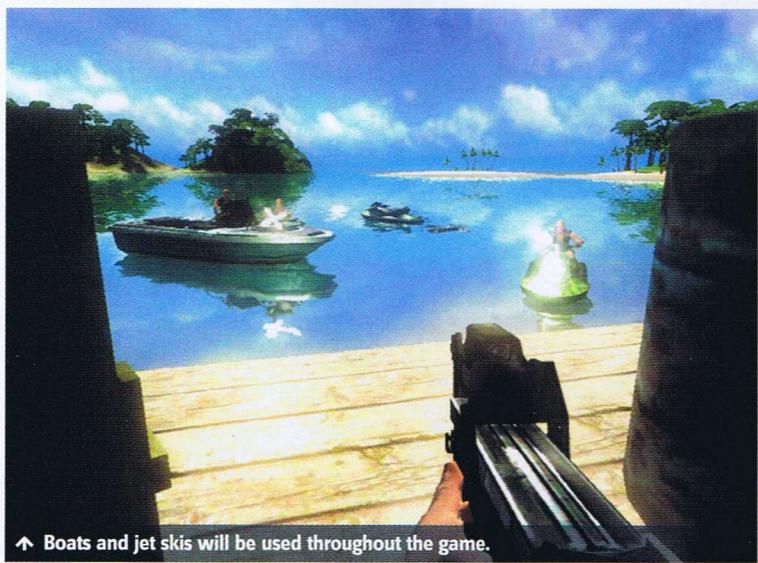
Yes, in the multiplayer modes we'll be able to lay traps for people too, then lure them over. Once snared, they can then undergo a severe thrashing.

TRAPS-APLenty

As well as sprung branch whip traps, we'll be able to use Claymores, snares, simple holes in the ground covered with twigs and a wire-operated multi-arrow launcher. Nice.



↑ Enemies never learn, do they? Never stand next to a crate of explosives when there's a hard-bitten ex-Marine with 'issues' in the area.



↑ Boats and jet skis will be used throughout the game.



↑ Do you make a clean kill or try blowing up the chopper? It's entirely up to you.



OFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN
XBOX MAGAZINE
EXCLUSIVE
SCREENSHOTS

↑ Yeah, so it's Sam Fisher, but have you ever seen him with pointy ears?

Batman Begins

Holy Film Tie-In That Actually Looks Good For A Change!

Dev: Eurocom	Pub: EA
Release: Winter 2005	Live: None
Players: 1	

THE MOMENT Chris O'Donnell uttered the immortally crap line "Holy rusted metal, Batman", the Dark Knight franchise came to a clattering halt. The last film has been voted one of the worst films ever made, and the drip-feed of Batman garbage we've had to endure on Xbox ever since should have seen the developers banged up in Arkham. But all that's about to change.

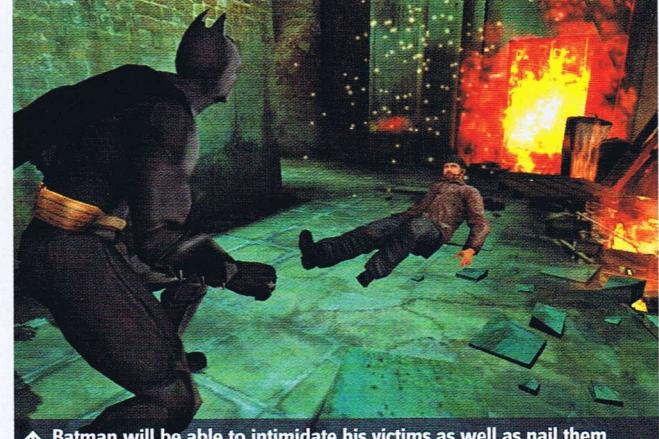
Batman Begins will return the Dark Avenger to his dark roots and is going to be far more than just a simple conversion for the masses. Set over 14 areas of Gotham City, the game sees Bruce Wayne adopt a vast range of methods for trapping and dealing with the city's crims. For the first time we'll actually be able to soar across rooftops, and use the grappling hook gun to ascend the sides of buildings and lurk in the shadows. It'll make Sam Fisher look as athletic as Russell Coight. Once Batman has reached his lofty perch, he'll be able to slowly descend on the grappling wire until he's directly behind his prey. With a swoop, the enemy will be off his feet and screaming into the shadows above while you go about wringing his neck or whispering things like "I'm your worst nightmare" in his ear. While it's going to be great fun dealing out justice, it's also going to be important to instil an element of fear in the bad guys. If we nail someone, they'll

try and crawl away, while Batman will be skulking towards the crims and intimidating them.

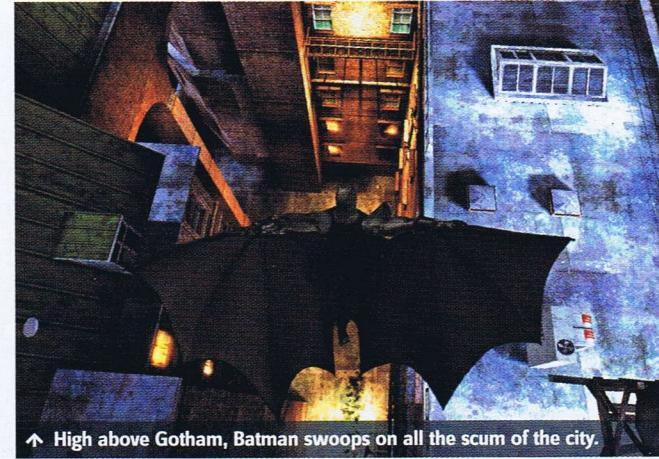
"Batman will travel the world seeking the means to fight injustice and turn fear against those who prey on the fearful," Jason Hall, senior vice president of Warner Bros Interactive Entertainment tells us. "Batman is about being rich with style, drama and action. These elements will help define this game and plunge players into the heart of the experience." As well as 'kapow'ing and 'gazzocking' enemies, we're going to have to think and plan our moves. "This time it's his intellect as well as strength and weaponry that will fight the sinister forces," Hall says, but you can bet there's still a lot of action too. Bat may now have brains, but he's lost none of his slightly psychotic brawling ability.

As well as his fists, we'll be able to make full use of Batman's utility belt. Gone are the camp Adam West sleepy-dust capsules; in their place are adrenal boosters that will enable Batman to avoid attacks and dodge bullets. We'll also be able to Batcuff villains then pummel the life out of them, and use the invaluable Batarang. The faithful Batmobile will be making an appearance too.

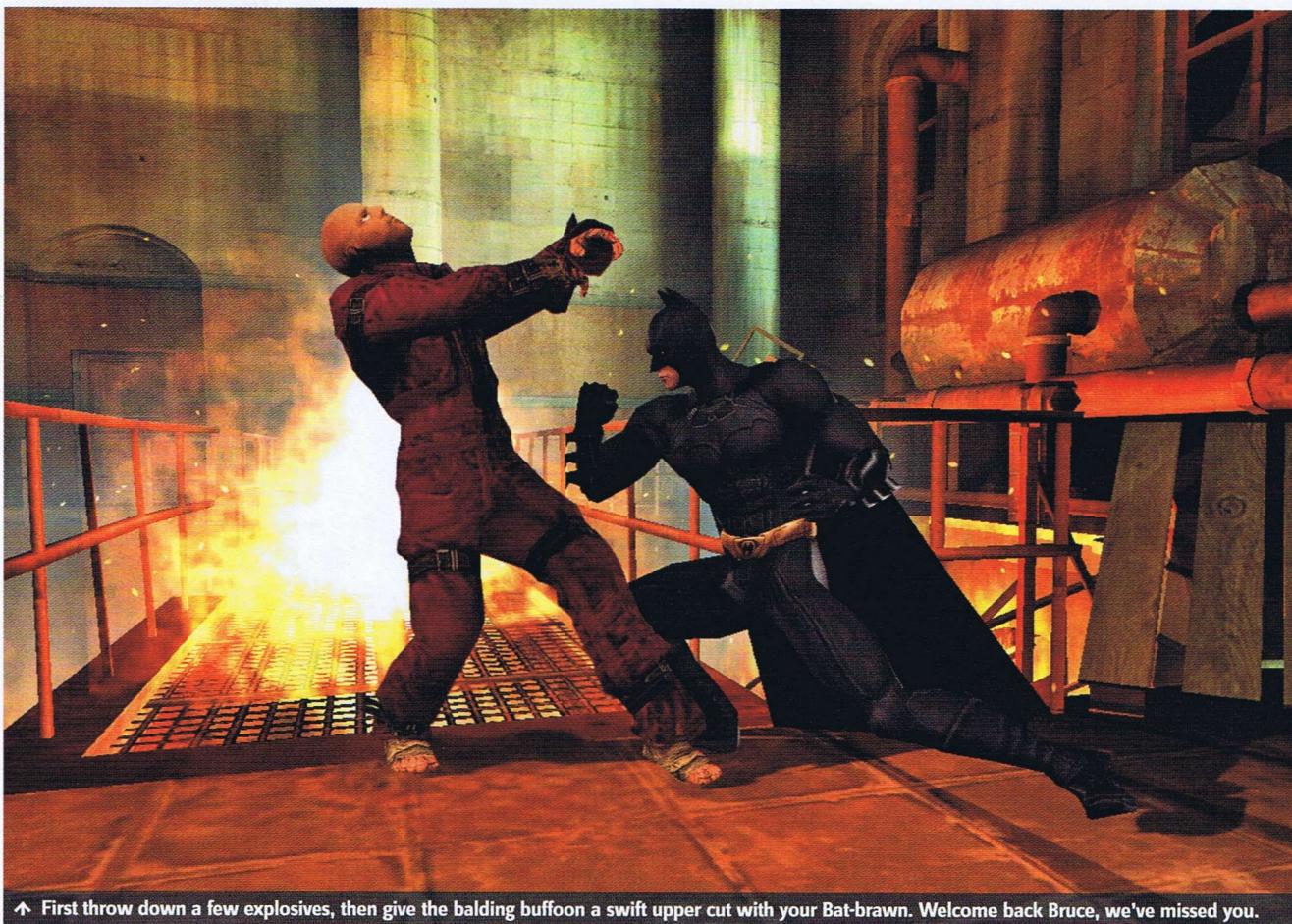
News about the appearance of the Scarecrow and Ra's Al-Ghul have yet to be confirmed, but with Eurocom so eager to make the game a faithful reproduction of Chris Nolan's film, we fully expect to see them up to no good in Gotham. With a rusty, gloomy city just waiting to be saved by Sam Fisher with wings, enjoy this feast of screens and start the countdown: Batman returns!



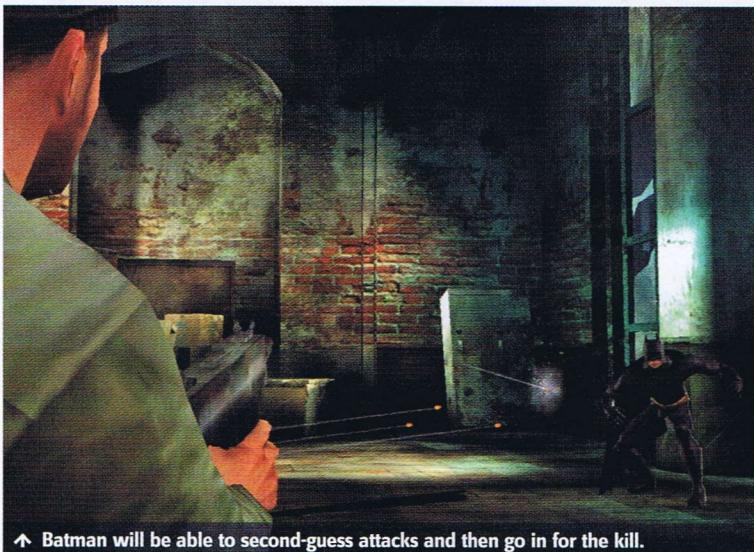
↑ Batman will be able to intimidate his victims as well as nail them.



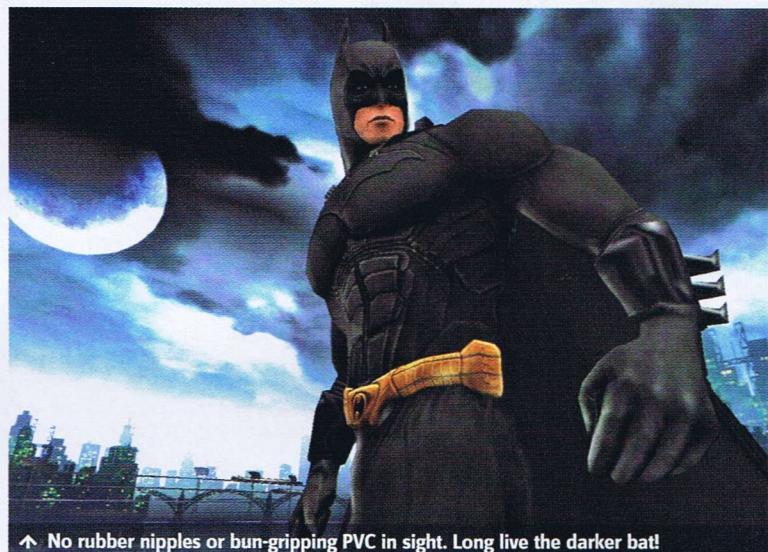
↑ High above Gotham, Batman swoops on all the scum of the city.



↑ First throw down a few explosives, then give the balding buffoon a swift upper cut with your Bat-brawn. Welcome back Bruce, we've missed you.



↑ Batman will be able to second-guess attacks and then go in for the kill.



↑ No rubber nipples or bun-gripping PVC in sight. Long live the darker bat!

Welcome to Gotham... ...you'll never leave!

CALTHOUGH images of Gotham and the insane hospital Arkham Asylum have been kept firmly under wraps, here are a couple of brief glimpses at what we can expect to see in the new year.

Arkham seems to resemble a haunted castle, surrounded by high gates and outbuildings, while Gotham itself looks like a miserable place. With gothic bridges leading to the main city and tall skyscrapers reaching into the stormy sky, it looks as though Batman is going to have his work cut out bringing peace and justice to the city.



↑ The entrance to Arkham. Gift shop to your left.



↑ Gotham from afar. You'll want to keep it that way.

Bonus info

BAD GUY BONANZA

Batman bad guys yet to appear in the movies are King Tut and Egghead. Somehow we reckon they're never going to make it to the silver screen. Thank God.

WHAT'S NEW, PUSSYCAT?

The last DC-based game we experienced was *Catwoman*. The film tanked, the game virtually sank without a trace, but don't worry, we won't be seeing a glimpse of her in this game at all. The other classic villains we're not so sure about.

BAT-TALK

Both Christian Bale (Batman) and Cillian Murphy (Scarecrow) are rumoured to be lending their voice talent to *Batman Begins*, but we'll have more news nearer the release!

Incoming

 All the essential news, exclusive previews and latest screenshots from the wonderful world of Xbox

P019 COMMANDOS FIRST PERSON

New details on *Commandos First Strike*.

P020 FORZA MOTORSPORTS

Could this really be a *Gran Turismo* killer?

P021 STREETS OF RAGE

Ha! Fooled you. It's not a brawler, it's the new *FIFA* game.

P021 SHAOLIN MONKS

It had to happen: another *Mortal Kombat* spinoff.

P022 REVENGE OF THE SITH

New screens of the game based on the next *Star Wars*.

P024 DELAYED, BUT NOT DOOM3D

Co-op is cocked, locked and ready to rock.

Xbox 2 Speculation Reaches Fever Pitch

Rumours fly that an official announcement could be made soon.

It is now widely believed in some industry circles that the Xbox 2 could launch late in 2005, releasing in key markets in time for the next Christmas rush. It's been rumoured that Bill Gates himself will formally announce the new console on January 5 at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, getting the drop on the PS3 announcement slated for the E3 show in May. A more comprehensive briefing, set to follow on the 17th, is expected to reveal more details, as well as key software titles for the product launch. By releasing in late '05, the console will also get a crucial head-start on the sales of its rival from Sony. Delays in the design and manufacture of the "Cell" Processor are likely to push back the PS3 to mid-2006, which would give Microsoft a solid six-month lead on the competition.

The graphics hardware will be supplied by ATI, and is already in production. The R500 uses Shader Model 3.0 technology and is a close relative of the R520, ATI's next generation PC graphics chip. Thus we can expect the lavish graphic quality of *Half-Life 2* - customised for ATI

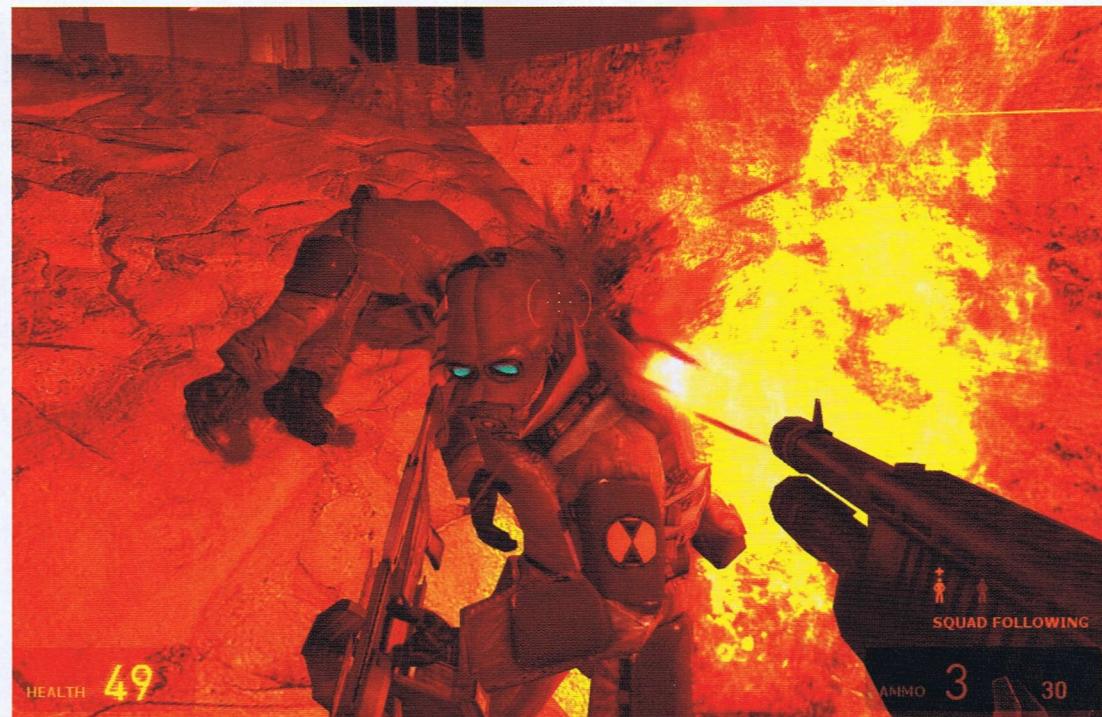
graphics - to be exceeded on the successor to the Xbox. Still in doubt, however, is the issue of backwards compatibility. Nvidia is understandably reluctant to reveal the inner workings of its chipset in the original Xbox to arch-rival ATI, and as a result we may not see our old Xbox games running in the Xbox 2. Interestingly, Nvidia appears to be producing the graphics chipset for the PS3.

Announcements of software in development for the next Xbox are already beginning to trickle through. Electronic Arts has confirmed it already has two titles in the pipeline, including *Battlefield Modern Combat* and *Black*, a first person shooter from *Burnout 3* developer Criterion.

Tantalising concept art and demo trailers are multiplying on the internet. *WarDevil* from UK developer the Digi-Guys is one example of vaporware that's turning heads, with a promo reel that appears to consist solely of pre-rendered footage. More convincing are claims from EA that their sports titles in future will represent the emotions of players in real time, based on how their team is performing.



↑ EA's next *Battlefield* game is bound for Xbox 2.



↑ *Half-Life 2* would look fantastic with its special effects cranked all the way up.

"Electronic Arts has confirmed it already has two titles in the pipeline, including *Battlefield Modern Combat*"

PO24 BARGAIN HUNTER X

Yes! There really are some great bargains out there!

PO26 AGENT X

Hello, what's this? It looks like *Fable* 2...

PO26 BUNGIE'S NEXT GAME

And no, it's not *Halo* 3...

PO28 DARKWATCH

A zombie-filled first-person shooter. *Excellent*.

PO28 STOLEN

She's a hero after Catherine Zeta-Jones' heart.

PO29 BITE OF THE LIVING DEAD

These zombies can chew bits off you!

PO30 SCRAPLAND

Info straight from the developer's mouth.

PO34 BROTHERS IN ARMS

More on-field tactics for the Second World War.

PO36 GALLERY

Yes, *Conker* looks *that* good in motion.

Commandos' New Perspective

New Gameplay Details On Commandos Strike Force

Pyro Studios has been good enough to show us more gameplay features from its next *Commandos* game. As reported last issue, *Commandos Strike Force* will break from the franchise's traditional mould of a third-person strategy game and present players with the opportunity to fight the Second World War from a first-person perspective. Pyro assures us this isn't another shameless *Medal of Honor* clone, pointing towards the implementation of one of the *Commandos* series' most enduring qualities: brain-busting strategy.

Every level poses challenges that reward players for exploiting every possible option. Stealth kills with a knife will allow players to progress undetected, while selectively sniping at Nazi field officers will send lesser soldiers into disarray. We've also learned that players will be able to freely switch between the game's three main characters (green beret, sniper and spy) during a level, which opens up many possibilities for strategic set pieces. In one scenario, the green beret was pinned down behind cover at street level by Nazi fire - you can save his neck by switching to the sniper, positioned in a nearby tower, and taking out the German gunners.

Games inspired by real-life wars are all trying to differentiate themselves with unique gameplay features. *Commandos Strike Force* is the first we've seen that takes in-game strategy beyond the usual scripted storylines with linear point-and-shoot levels, so keep an eye out for more details in our future issues.



▲ Switch between the Spy, Green Beret and Sniper for added tactical efficiency.

A New Castle For The King

EA Opens Shop in Southport

Electronic Arts officially opened the doors to its new Australian home base in the Gold Coast locale of Southport on November 19. Australian swimming champion, Grant Hackett, was on hand to conduct the official opening ceremony (ie. cut the ribbon). The move follows yet another strong year for the world's biggest software publisher, which was also popularly touted at the recent Australian Game

Developers Conference in Melbourne as the only safe publisher for game development studios to work under. The expansive new office features game-testing studios, boardrooms, a generously sized viewing theatre, a battery of office cubicles and luxurious water views that almost rival their Pyrmont office. After a little digging, we also uncovered a room in the back with a ping pong table. Congratulations on the new office, EA!



▲ Jamie, Olivia and Peter love their new digs!



▲ Ryan Jones, GM of EA.

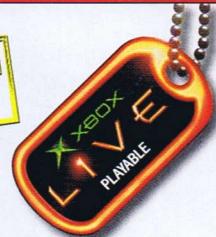


▲ Play some table tennis in the room out behind the rear red pillar.

You Are What You Race

Come in Gran Turismo, your time is well and truly up...

ONLY ON
XBOX



THIS IS, UNOFFICIALLY of course, Xbox's answer to *Gran Turismo*. Whereas we've always indulged in racers with arcade sensibilities such as *PGR2* (Issue 22, 9.3) and *Burnout 3* (Issue 32, 9.2), a nagging gap has been left in our desire for all things four-wheeled. The Xbox has never had a straight-laced driving sim to rival *GT*, but all that's about to change. We played *Forza Motorsport* recently and it is, even at this stage, a walloping, indulgent, spectacular beast. It purrs quality.

It will be the most customisable racer game to date and should set the new standard for under-the-bonnet jiggery-pokery. You can completely customise cars to your exact requirements. From 'Daz 'n' Shaz' on the bonnet to flaming pink skulls screaming

down the sides, from your clan logo on the wings to graphics of frogs in astronaut suits on the roof, you'll be able to do it all. And with up to 100 paint layer options, you could splatter it with drivel if you prefer.

A Live mode called Car Club will encourage clans to decorate their cars in team colours then bring them to competitive races. The respect a team earns on the track will directly increase the value of its cars. There'll come a point in *Forza* where players will actually be able to sell a winning image to new drivers who wish to become instantly respected.

Under the hood things are just as impressive. We played using a Porsche 911 Carrera S and it handled beautifully; the weight, tilt, lean and acceleration oozed from the screen. There are over

40 quality manufacturers in here, and combined they've lent over 200 models to *Forza*. From Bentley and the Rolls-Royce Phantom, to the sleekest Italian drool models, the garage even puts *PGR2* to shame. And best of all, there's damage modelling too.

Tracks are just as lavish, with over 50 ribbons in 17 race environments. Rio, Tokyo and New York all feature, as do six real-world tracks including Tsukuba, Nurburgring and Laguna Seca. There are five fictitious tracks, two massive point-to-point environments split over several huge stages, one autocross map divided into ten sectors and no doubt a partridge in a pear tree too. In all there are roughly 400 races available in the Career mode. *Forza* is due out in the spring and it's going to be huge.

PIMP YOUR RIDE

Garage upgrades on offer

LUCKILY ALL PARTS are co-ordinated into tuned packages so we can't upgrade ourselves into a corner. All the packages are based on the types of staged upgrades people make on the cars in the real world too. These lists are far from complete!

Engine and Power Upgrades

Intake and Exhaust
Fuel and Ignition
Turbo Kits
Supercharger Kits
Intercooler
Engine Swaps

Appearance and Aero Upgrades

Front Bumper
Rear Bumper
Side Skirts
Hood Scoop
Rear Wing
Roll Cage



Chassis and Drivetrain Upgrades

Suspension
Brakes
Transmission
Clutch and Flywheel
Weight Reduction
Tyres
Driveline and Differential



Custom Paint and Vinyl

Up to 100 layers of decals and vinyls can be applied and combined for unique designs. Choose from 150 manufacturer decals on offer.

Tuning Options

Tyre Compound
Tyre Pressure
Final Drive Gear
Forward Gears
Camber
Anti-Roll Bar
Spring Rate
Ride Height
Bump Damping
Rebound Damping
Downforce
Brake Pressure
Brake Bias
Handbrake Pressure
Limited Slip Diff Accel Pressure
Limited Slip Diff Decel Pressure
Center Differential Split (AWD Only)




↑ This pair of muscle cars go at it head to head on the circuit. On Live races will be even more frantic. *Forza* looks stunning!



↑ The TVR Tuscan S - with metallic paintwork!



↑ The McLaren F1 GTR. Good enough to eat.



↑ The Nissan Skyline is a walloping beast that eats the track up beneath it.

Streets of Rage

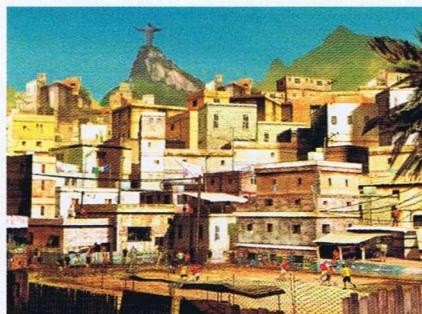
FIFA slums it with the rest of us gutter-dwellers

→ TAKING US BACK to a time when men were men and footballs were pigs' bladders, *FIFA STREET* is going to give the beautiful game back to the people. Gone are the flash stadiums, multi-million dollar contracts for soft drink-endorsing dunderheads, and in come the slums of Rio. From backstreets filled with nothing but raw passion for the sport and a few blingy urban choons, *FIFA STREET* is set to be a case of 'does exactly what it says on the tin'.

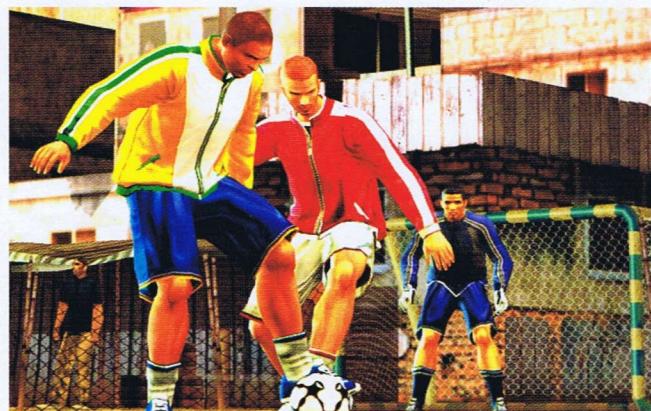
Stars, of course, will lend their likenesses to the game, with Beckham prancing around in his Adidas trackies, but, like *Def Jam* (Issue 34, 8.5) with half-time oranges, we'll be able to fully customise our players. As a career on the street progresses, the players on our team will earn kudos and respect from rival footy gangs, thereby unlocking all manner of kit and gear.

Gone are socce rules too, so off-side is no longer an issue (not that any of us knew what the hell it was anyway), and the four-on-four matches will be down to individual skill rather than linesmen and ref decisions. *FIFA STREET* will feature more dummy-moves and one-on-one footwork than any other *FIFA* game so far so, at last, disputes of

cheating and bad decisions will be answered by nothing other than player skill. And these battles will take place across the globe, from floodlit basketball courts in Amsterdam to shanty towns and warehouses, there is nowhere you can't smack a ball. It'll also mean that people such as Beckham, who are adept at firing in free kicks, may actually be beaten by Cristiano Ronaldo, and that could be really interesting to watch. We'll have more news and screens soon.



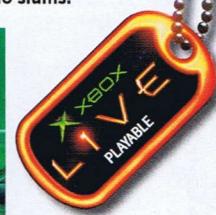
↑ Another shot of that Rio footy ghetto.



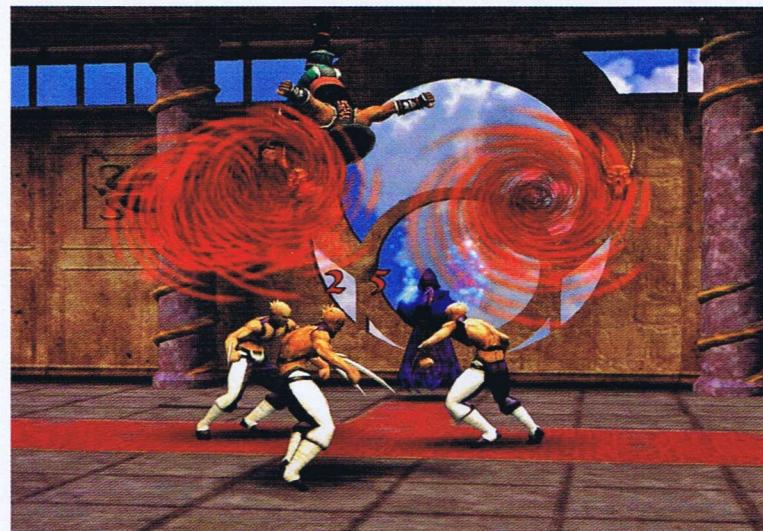
↑ Beckham squares up against Ronaldo in the Rio slums.



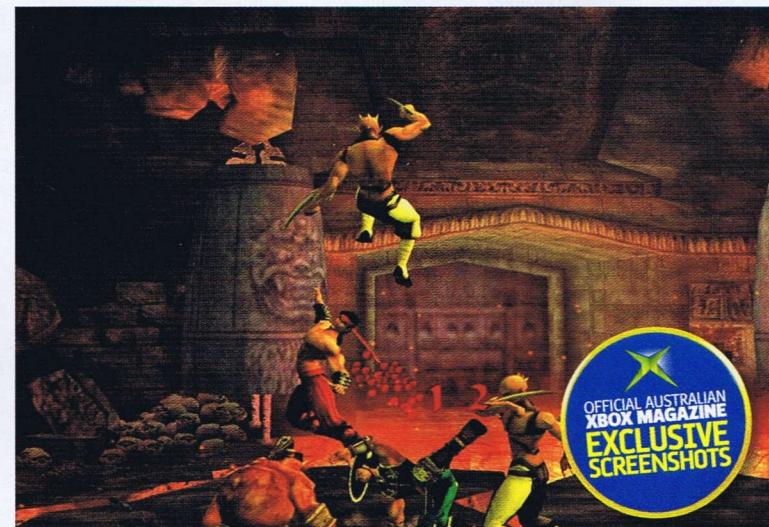
↑ Amsterdam also appears in *FIFA STREET*.



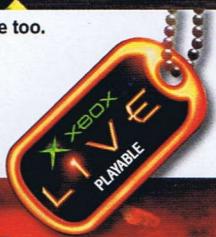
→ Not had enough 2D fighting action? SNK Vs Capcom: SVC Chaos is on its way! Huzzah!



↑ Looks like *Ninja Gaiden* may have been an influence for *Shaolin Monks*.



↑ It also looks as though there's some *Prince of Persia* in there too.



Unholy Crusaders

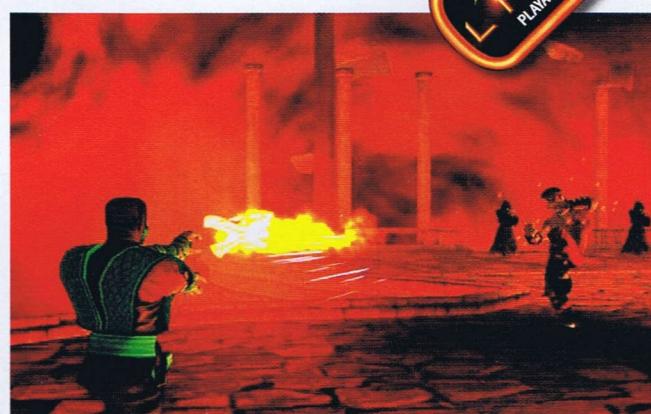
Prepare to get completely Fryer Tucked...

→ OH, HOW WE long to pull someone's spine through their sputtering, bloodied neck. *Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks* has been announced by Midway and, judging by these exclusive screens of the action, it all looks a little different to the beat 'em ups we're used to. In fact, with a *MK* title now promised once a year, the series is expanding into ever new territories. Expect a Jamie Oliver-style cookbook with gizzards and gullets next Christmas. Until then though, *Shaolin Monks* will feature the adventures of monks Kung Lau and Liu Kang as they wage war against demons through the *MK* universe.

Many of the characters' back stories will be played through as the monks travel throughout the lands of the entire catalogue of *MK* games, including the bizarre mini-games such as *Chess Kombat*.

The main bulk of the game will be action-adventure driven and, while fighting arenas will play a part in the game, there will also be a strong narrative, two-player co-op mode, boss battles, and *Tomb Raider*-style puzzles that will need solving. Unlike *Tomb Raider* though, we suspect the consequences of failing to complete a puzzle will be a little more 'decapitated head in a pool of stomach' rather than 'screaming bint falling onto rocks'.

Every *MK* character will make an appearance, whether it be in boss fights or small cameos. Being able to play as them all is unlikely though, and Midway is keeping the story and in-depth details securely under wraps. As soon as we unleash a few fatalities on Midway though, expect a flurry of news. Until then, sit back, join the party, and salivate.



↑ Battle arenas will still appear so don't fret if you're a beat 'em up nut!

► Freeze Frame

Pariah's trailer secrets exposed right here!



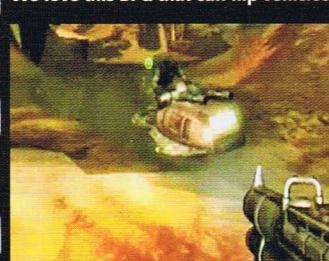
↑ Flying sentinel-style robots can be blasted away with a plasma shotgun.



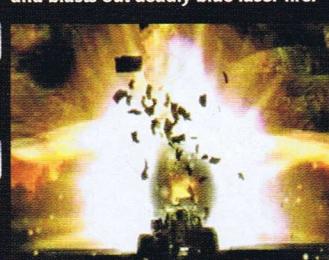
↑ Battle massive military dropships in a huge sun-scorched gorge.



↑ We might be able to dual wield. We love this BFG that can flip vehicles!



↑ Pariah's answer to a Ghost. It's fast and blasts out deadly blue laser fire.



↑ He's just caused explosions that send ripples through the ground.



↑ The full trailer can be found at www.pariahgame.com



↑ Another reason to celebrate: this is the last time we'll ever see those damned 'Roger Roger' droids.

Love This You Will

Ninja Gaiden with lightsabers? You bet your fuzzy Wookiee butt...

With the *Episode III* trailer doing the rounds on the net, LucasArts unleashed news and screens about the forthcoming film tie-in. Not only does the film actually look worthy of *Star Wars*, but the game tie-in actually looks good too. LucasArts is on a roll and it's not afraid to show off the goods.

The *Episode III* game will allow us to play as Obi-Wan in his desperate attempt to keep Anakin from turning, plus as Anakin himself as he slides that slippery slope towards the Emperor's grip. And, whereas some *Star Wars* film tie-ins may not have been all they should have been, *Episode III* is going to blow all doubts away. As Anakin grows in stature he'll be able to unleash a full range of dark-side powers - from lightning attacks to Force chokes - as he cuts through the Jedi order slaying all the characters from the previous movies. For Obi-Wan, unable to match the ferocity of Anakin's attacks, there will be sly moves to employ. He can channel the Force into his lightsaber, making it faster and more accurate than the swathe of enemies that'll try to wash over him. He can also use mind control in a far greater capacity than any of us have ever seen. If there are too many enemies, Obi-Wan can turn them against each other then make his escape.

General Grievous obviously plays a part, but for the first time LucasArts has released pictures of his bodyguards - mechanised slaughtering machines that whiz through the air like intelligent shurikens. There will be a Bantha's feeding pouch of acrobatic slaughter, thanks mainly to stunt coordinator Nick Gillard's involvement. Fighting styles and combat have been taken directly from the film, plus he's had a hand in creating exclusive fighting styles especially for Xbox. Think *Ninja Gaiden* with lightsabers. After all, this movie is where the whole galaxy explodes into chaos. LucasArts is no longer restraining itself for bigger and better movies to come; it no longer has to worry about delivering bigger in the next episode. This is where it all ends, and where the full fury of the dark side sweeps through every tie-in and promo for the movie. Come 19 May 2005, expect to be utterly and ferociously blown away.



↑ General Grievous's bodyguards are exceptionally hard to kill.



↑ Anakin unleashes his dark side on old bearded hobo wannabe Obi-Wan.

WHO YOU ARE IS NOT ALWAYS...



IN MY OPINION

"Red Dawn"

The Nanny State strikes again, this time in South Korea. This otherwise sophisticated gaming nation has banned *Ghost Recon 2* for drearily predictable political reasons. Set in 2011, it depicts a war where a renegade North Korean general runs amok, invading China and forcing the Americans to solve the problem. The obvious explanation for this censorship is knee-jerk political correctness; the government doesn't want anyone to get "offended". This is the same fruity ideology that gets nativity scenes banned from shopping centres.

A second likely motivation is embarrassment on the part of South Korean nationalists. While they would love to be reunited with their estranged cousins to the north, it is a continuing inconvenience that US military power would be instrumental in any such union. China is massing troops on the border, and only America's planes, ships and missiles can prevent the reds from claiming any North Korean real estate. Despite this reality, antagonism towards foreigners in general, and American servicemen in particular, is at an all time high in the south. Yanks are good enough to die for their freedom, but they're not good enough to date their daughters.

But the most logical explanation, as far as I'm concerned, has nothing to do with politics or parochialism, and everything to do with timing. North Korean soldiers are rampaging through China right now, terrorising the locals, looting villages, and dragging any Koreans they find back to Kim Jong Il's regime. It's true. You just don't hear about it much on the news. Their actions are random and unsanctioned, little more than banditry. Together with increasing numbers of high-level defectors, it's a sign of the regime's imminent collapse.

The problem is this: *Ghost Recon 2* is already obsolete. China's armies have marched on Kashmir and Afghanistan in the past, and with the build-up over the straits of Taiwan, conquest is on the agenda. A realistic WWIII scenario would involve a standoff with the US, SK and NK forces on one side, and the millions of the PLA on the other. This political dynamite would do as much as the Hainan Island affair to tarnish US/China relations. I guess with realism in gaming, you can have too much of a good thing. Tom Clancy loves to write about WWIII, but I don't think he wants to start it.

Sharaz Jek is an independent journalist. His views do not necessarily reflect those of the Official Australian Xbox Magazine.

DELAYED, BUT NOT DOOM3D

iD Opens Up about the Future of Doom 3 on Xbox

→ The Xbox version of *Doom 3* was originally supposed to come out in time for Christmas but, to be fair, true to their reputation the folks at iD Software never committed to a solid release date. They are one of the few development studios in the world that can get away with saying "It's done when it's done".

Now that Christmas is done and dusted and the daunting scenario of having to compete against *Halo 2* is no more, the campaign is on again for what's expected to be the scariest game on Xbox.

"I'm shocked that it runs this good on Xbox", quips Lead Designer Tim Willits, "Even Microsoft was impressed". Of course, Willits is referring to concerns about how well the Xbox version handles the voluminous memory requirements of the PC original. "We were initially worried about having to cut out so much stuff that it wouldn't be the same," he said, "but most of these issues were solved when we turned the PC version's 28 levels into 42 smaller ones on Xbox". And thus, load



times remain quick and the story flows along smoothly.

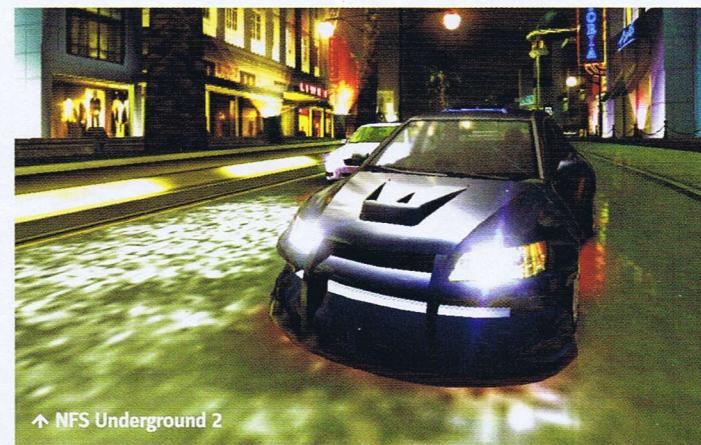
For most people, however, the main drawcard of the Xbox version of *Doom 3* is an all-new two-player co-operative mode. "Think of it like a Director's Cut of the original game", says Willits, "it's a faster, more action-focussed version of the game that puts players through the most enjoyable areas".

Despite the upcoming release of the *Resurrection of Evil* expansion pack on PC, there's been no confirmation of any downloadable content for *Doom 3* on Xbox. *Doom 3* is expected to be released in mid-February this year, but as expected, that's not necessarily set in stone either. Until then, enjoy this brand new image that's just been released for the game.



BARGAINHUNTER X

Ralph Panebianco dives into the bargain bins on behalf of the cheapskate in all of us...



↑ NFS Underground 2

NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND 2

Publisher: EA Games

Was: \$99.95 Now: \$84.76

Available at: Everywhere

It's only a little bit more than the original in the Classics range. If only the cars were as cheap as this...

GOLDENEYE: ROGUE AGENT

Publisher: EA Games

Was: \$99.95 Now: \$84.95

Available at: Target

More Bond for your buck with this bargain price!

BARGAIN OF THE MONTH

MICROSOFT KIDS PACK

Contains both *Grabbed by the Ghoulies* and *Voodoo Vince*

Value price: \$49.95

Top value for money for the kids.

SMASH PACK

Contains both *Tao Feng: Fist of the Lotus* and *Mech Assault*

Value price: \$49.95

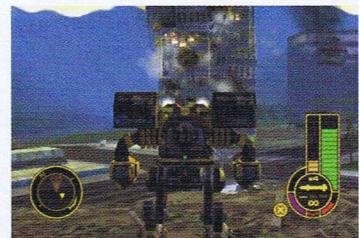
Both are solid multiplayer games.



↑ GoldenEye: Rogue Agent



↑ Voodoo Vince



↑ MechAssault

WHO YOU WILL BECOME.



AGENT X



Delving into enemy territory to bring you the latest gossip from the world of games. If anyone asks, you ain't seen me, right?

THE EGO HAS LANDED

Word has it that the Peter Molyneux smash hit *Fable* (Issue 32, 9.7) may be seeing a sequel sooner than I first suspected. Going undercover one night as a cleaning lady, peering through stacks of loo roll and disinfectant I discovered that a team is already in the stages of programming and shaping *Fable 2*. Word has it that they were on it even before the first game hit the shelves. This is great news, especially as it means the sequel will be coming to Xbox rather than Xbox 2. I'll have more once I've infiltrated them again, armed with my mop.

BROKEN FORTH

It was supposed to be the final part in the trilogy, but it seems you can't keep a sleeping dragon down - my contacts have heard news that *Broken Sword 4* is in development. It seems there have been a few rumblings over at Revolution, with clandestine figures creeping in and out of the building all hours of the night. While this doesn't necessarily mean that George and Nico will be resurrected (in both senses of the word if you've played the third chapter), the cry of the fanboys might be too much to resist. I'll have more soon!

X TO BE ELITE?

PC space shooter and all round galaxy-hopping space trader *X2: The Return* could well be coming to Xbox. Described by some as the best space game since *Elite*, the only problem the development team is having at the moment is trying to squeeze all that infinite outer space loveliness onto the Xbox. As soon as they've figured out how to do that, I have it on good authority that we'll all be playing it over Xbox Live. I'll bring you more once I've worked my wily, smoochy, spy-like charms on *X2*'s PR person. Woo, ha, ha, ha!

SUCK IT UP

It's amazing what a little drop of truth serum in someone's bedtime milk can do. It may not be gospel but there was a glint in the eye of my



↑ X2: The Return
Headed to Xbox

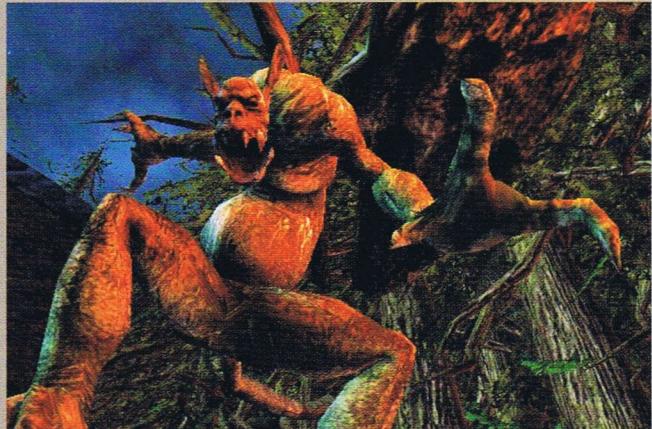


↑ George Stobart - back in action even after BS3?

contact when I asked about the possibility of *Vampire: The Masquerade - Bloodlines* coming to Xbox. The whole thing was quickly swept under the carpet but I know a cover-up when I smell one. Expect to see some vampy action on the cards come 2005, or I'll self-destruct in five seconds and all that nonsense.

CARELESS WHISPER

Bad news on the Xbox Live Chat feature that's been launched in Japan. It looks like we'll never get to see it here in Australia on this generation of Xbox. The word on the street is that Microsoft is keeping it for Xbox 2. Boo.



↑ Maybe these guys will make an appearance in *Fable 2*?

→ It's a strange world. EA's forthcoming *Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath* has been renamed and is now called *Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath*!

AND FINALLY...

Phoenix Resurrected

With *Halo 2* released, what's next for Bungie?

→ WELL, THAT'S IT, *Halo 2* is in every household up and down the Xbox-owning community of the world, and Bungie can put its feet up. With *Halo 3* due for release on Xbox 2 it hardly seems worth doing any work for a few months, surely? Well, not so.

Before *Halo 2* sucked up all the resources at Bungie, the company had a project on the go called *Phoenix*, and now it seems that the little

baby is about to emerge from the post-*Halo 2* fallout. Apparently *Halo*'s master storyteller Joe Staten is 'busy at work on several projects, including the possible resurrection of *Phoenix*'.

The project was shelved nearly two years ago but with pressure off getting Master Chief back in action, it now seems likely we'll see the fiery title reborn. We'll have more news about *Phoenix* and everything Bungie has planned for the future soon!





FABLE™

FOR EVERY CHOICE, A CONSEQUENCE.

What if the choices you made had everlasting repercussions? Your every action would immediately affect your appearance and change the way people perceive you. Would you wield a sword in the name of virtue, create a path of evil with spells and treachery, or become something in between? Before you create your destiny, know this: no two Fables are the same. What will yours be?

xbox.com.au/fable



Microsoft
game studios



it's good to play together

DarkWatch

Something wicked this way comes...

Dev: Sammy Studios	Pub: Sega
Release: March 2005	Live: 2-16 players
Players: 1-4	
0	Percentage Complete 70 100

WE TOOK A PEEK at Sammy's undead shooter *DarkWatch*, and are pleased to report it looks set to be far more than an exercise in peppering lumbering scythe-swishing zombies with lead shot.

As Jericho Cross, a cursed gunslinger with vampire blood coursing through his veins, we'll be faced with a unique choice - whether to seek and destroy the undead (thereby ending the curse), or succumb to the bloodlust and turn into a demonic

killing machine. Every kill you make (or don't make for that matter) will affect your reputation through the West, effectively making *DarkWatch* an FPS RPG.

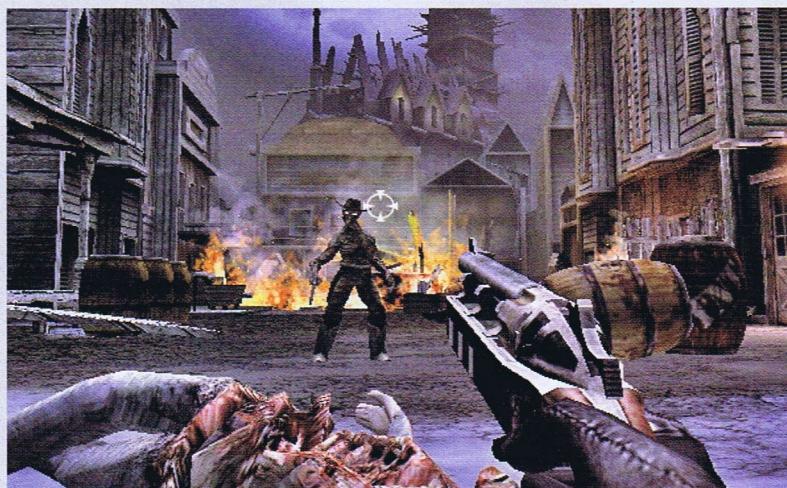
The main antagonist Tala will appear as a dark muse offering advice, temptation and glory if you opt to follow her. Her promises will lead Jericho down a darker road filled with greater powers, but if you choose the path of righteousness things will get a lot more difficult. Tala will send battalions of undead outlaws your way, the vampire curse will try harder to bend you to its will, and you'll need to find ever more inventive ways to protect yourself. You're really going to have to think your way out of trouble - a difficult task when every vampire in the land has got a straw in your face and is trying to suck your innards out through your ears...



↑ You can take their heads off but will they keep coming? We doubt it.



↑ His flesh has rotted but he's got his Levi's intact. Like Status Quo.



↑ Your sharpshooter will need very special ammo to deal with these guys.

Stolen

Sneaking out of shops in a handbag near you...

Dev: Blue 52	Pub: Hip Interactive
Release: March 2005	Live: None
Players: 1	
0	Percentage Complete 70 100

WE TOOK A PEEK at Sammy's undead shooter *DarkWatch*, and are pleased to report it looks set to be far more than an exercise in peppering lumbering scythe-swishing zombies with lead shot.

The thing with Anya, though, is her compassion for humanity. Not afraid to break into secure warehouses and museums for the odd Star Of India, she's a thief at heart and not a killer, and it's this that makes *Stolen* so different from other stealth 'em ups. Throughout the entire game, you'll never kill a soul, and that adds an entirely new dynamic to the game, one that will require the most painstaking pre-planning and stealth.

But far from being a catsuit-wearing saint, Anya has skills up her sleeve that even Fisher would envy. During those moments where a wrung neck would be so tempting, Anya can fluidly dart into recesses and zip up to overhanging pipes to avoid detection. She can also pre-empt detection with a skill that's a virtual carbon copy of Daredevil's sonic



↑ *Stolen* - taking stealth games back to their roots? We shall see.

radar. By equipping her sonic visor then making a noise, a sonic wave flows out from around her, penetrating and highlighting everything in the vicinity. It's a cool trick, but not her only one. Mini-games will require Anya to pick locks, hack computers and crack safes - the skills she'll need to carry out her objectives as well as avoid being seen.

One thing we did notice, and perhaps this is because the game is still in development, was the



↑ Spot the developer's baby! There it is!



↑ Fisher got there first but will Anya do it better?

distinct lack of variety with enemies. If we weren't being pursued by portly security guards we were avoiding special ops guys and hitmen and that was about the range of the threat. Let's just hope that as Anya strives for bigger and better trophies for the mantle in her Croydon semi, she'll stumble across more complex puzzles, harder levels, and a bevy of enemies. With Fisher and Solid Snake back for more in the new year, she's going to need them.

Bite Of The Living Dead!

Give your enemies a piece of your mind by eating theirs!

► YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE for *Halo* and you now sleep on a bed of crisp \$100 bills. All eyes are on you for your next project. Will it be a futuristic shooter? A space opera with GM soldiers? No, you want to keep us on our toes. Gone is Master Chief - the dead have risen and a new hero lurches into view: Stubbs the Zombie, rebel without a pulse.

Alexander Seropian worked on *Halo* for Bungie but left to found new developer, Wideload. "Nothing has the sweet smell of success like rotting zombie flesh," he says. "We loved the idea because of the unique player experience and the potential of the main character. We're enjoying bringing this concept to life... or un-death." With Stubbs we'll be able to grab handfuls of cankerous rotting flesh from our guts and toss it at enemies. A head makes a perfect bowling ball, and sick is a great projectile weapon.

Stubbs will be set in rundown Punchbowl PA, a city built by President Eisenhower in the '60s as a vision of the future. With crumbling 21st-century facades, shopping centres (can't have zombies without them), mad militia men and an insane barber shop quartet on the loose, *Stubbs* has a lot to deal with. But it's not all going to be mindless slaughter, for *Stubbs* is a good guy. He just wants to spread love and ultimately find love. Yeah, really.

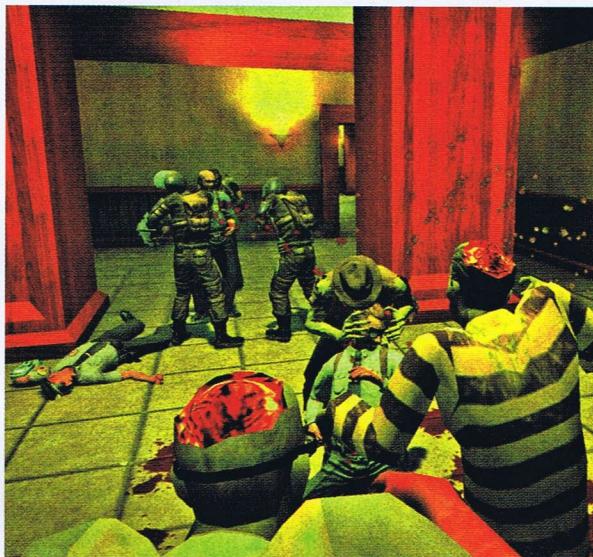
And where does the *Halo* engine fit into this festering feast? Well, you can destroy the entire city, spreading all manner of third-person chaos across the world. As that smart AI kicks in, people will fight back, but you'll be there, the saviour of the undead kind, ripping people limb from limb. It's going to be like playing as part of The Flood, and we can't wait.



► Chew your arm off and set it wandering!



► *Stubbs the Zombie* in *Rebel Without a Pulse* is due out in winter.



► *Stubbs the Zombie* in *Rebel Without a Pulse* is due out in winter.

► Keep 'em peeled for *King Of Fighters: Maximum Impact*. Yes, those SNK boys certainly know who to chum them out!

BIZARRE

Weird goings-on from the world of Xbox

Half Shot

Arcade developer Taito has revealed that it plans to turn *Half-Life 2* into an arcade game in Japanese arcades by mid-2005. Using its Type-X arcade board, *Half-Life 2* will feature the regular single-player mode and online multiplayer options that will link arcade machines across the country. The arcade cabinet won't be your bog-standard affair either; Taito is planning an enclosed capsule fitted with Dolby 5.1 to play the top title in. Now, if only we could get hold of one...



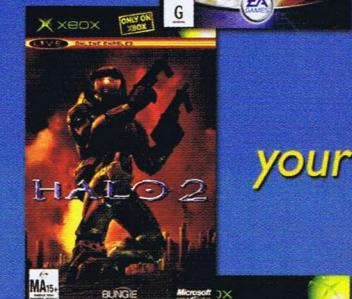
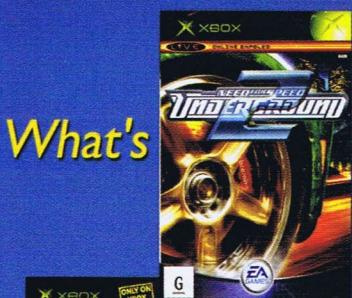
► Play *Half-Life 2* on arcades in Japan!



President Chief

Although the world may be on the brink of Armageddon with Bush back in power, at least the Americans saw the funny side of the end of the world. During the run-up to the election, a spoof news show saw their political pundit caught red-handed playing *Halo* on the studio screen. Well, at least Xbox got a plug.

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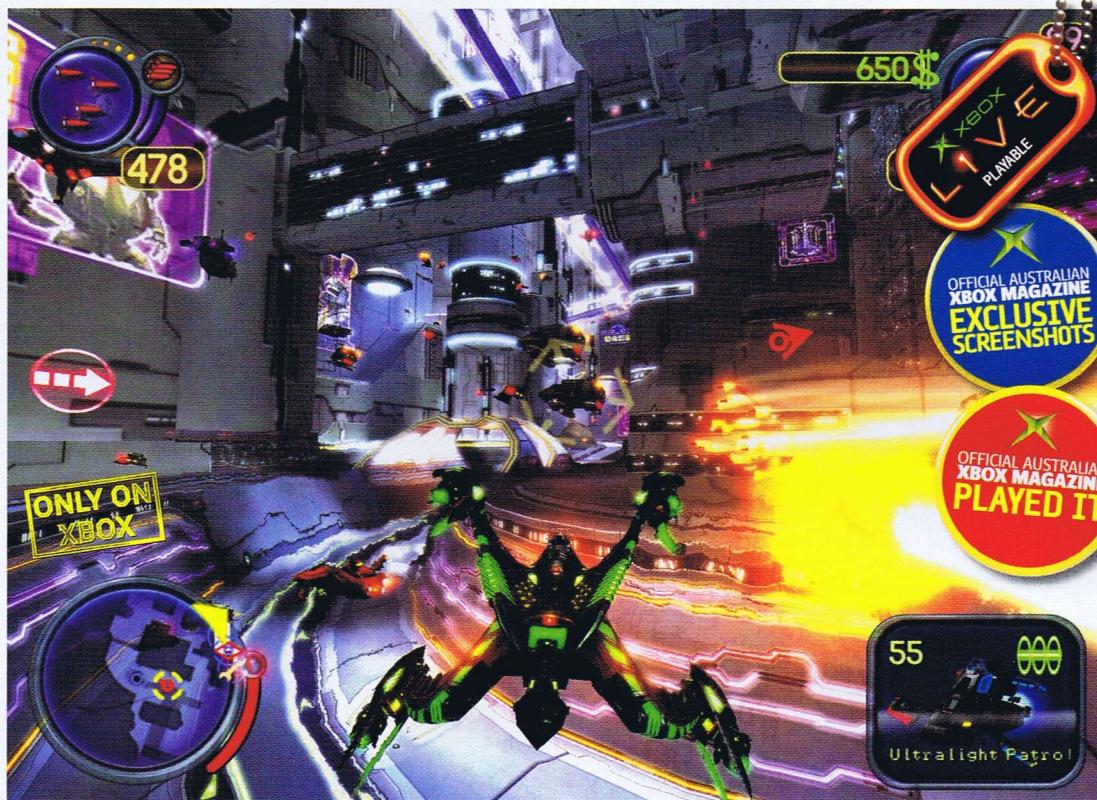
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↑ Outside you can fly every vehicle you can see!

Q&A

SCRAPLAND

We probe the twisted mind of American McGee to discover his latest warped vision of reality. Or something like that

Dev: MercuryStream	Pub: Deep Silver
Release: Jan 2005	Live: 2-16 players
Players: 1-2	
0 Percentage Complete	100

This isn't your average American McGee game. It's not a twisted version of a literary classic and there are no scary monsters. What's happened?

This isn't an American McGee game in the sense of 'American McGee's Whatever'; it's 'American McGee Presents' and that's very different. I've had some input as executive producer about the dialogue and characters, making them more rounded and quirky, but *Scrapland* very much speaks for itself. I hope that with *Scrapland* we'll create a whole new breed of American McGee fans and introduce them to the American McGee world. Then they're free to move on and discover the rest of the Twisted Reality world.

Tell us a little about the game.

It's based on a strong story - everything we do at American McGee relies on having a strong story with strong, interesting characters. The main character is D-Tritus. He built himself from scrap so he could go off and see the universe. He stumbles across Scrapland, a planet inhabited solely by robots. It turns out to be a future Earth that we kinda destroyed to a point that no one wants to inhabit it except for the robots. None of this really comes into play in the story but it's a cool back story. As you run around the planet you'll begin to see little details that point to it once being Earth. D-Tritus arrives and is given a job as reporter. When he arrives he's given a choice of jobs to do and cycles through them until he reaches the lowliest

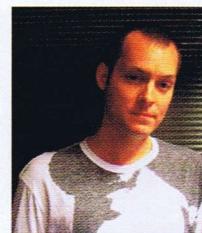
job there is. No offence to you, of course! As a reporter he's thrown into this mystery to uncover who's murdering important robots on Scrapland.

How will D-Tritus go about solving the mystery?

One of our goals is to make the game as accessible as possible to a wide range of players. Every part of *Scrapland* will be open from the beginning, and the environments are huge. It's up to you how you investigate each area, not up to pre-scripted moments and forced story aspects. Throughout the game there are hints as to what you should be doing next and it takes place in two primary areas. The first is the interior of buildings - banks, police stations, the press building etc - then there's exterior gameplay, where you're flying around in ships. One major feature that's fairly unique is the ability to play as any character at any time. This allows us to present the player with what might be considered fairly standard missions - such as assassinating certain characters or collecting a number of items - but, with the character-shifting dynamic, there will be times that there'll be half a dozen different ways of completing a mission. Every character has unique abilities. One of D-Tritus's main abilities is he can overwrite any other character. If you wanted to become another character, you can go up to them, press the action button, and morph into them.

Will all this shifting into other characters be part of the gameplay or is it just a cool gimmick?

It's vital. It introduces an element of gameplay that's fairly constant, because becoming other characters is actually illegal. You're in constant avoidance of cops - if you're impersonating someone you've got to be aware of where the police are. If they see you morph into someone they won't be happy.



↑ McGee: normal!



↑ D-Tritus in a robot laser church, dontchaknow!



↑ The weapons will be as cool as the vehicles.



↑ D-Tritus's girl, Betty. Nice robo-thong!

What does that do for the gameplay?

Despite the ability to shapeshift, there's a stealth element throughout *Scrapland*. You'll have to avoid being seen breaking the law, and lure characters away from everyone to take their form. The shapeshifting also affects how you go about completing your missions. For instance, if you're on a mission to kill a corrupt official or take out a target, there can be various methods of doing it. You could just walk up to the robot and shoot him - but have the law on your back - or you could be devious. One of the types of robot is an Beholder droid, capable of scanning into robot's hardwiring and seeing their motive functions and secrets. You could morph into one of these, accuse your target of homicide, then have the law drive by and kill him for you.

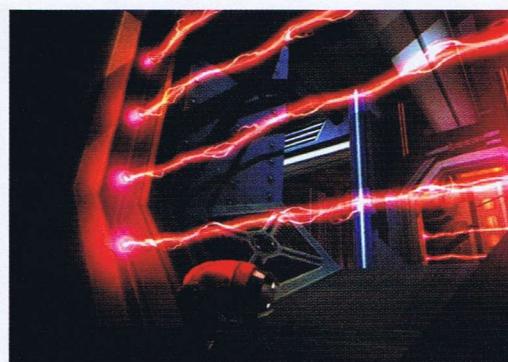
Sometimes there are various secondary stages you'll need to complete before meeting your objective, so how you go about those means that missions can sometimes be completed up to 40 or 50 different ways. When you consider we've got more than 140 missions, that's a lot of free choice!

What other droids can we play as, and will they all have some kind of ability that will let us complete missions in our own way?

As well as D-Tritus they'll be 14 to play as: cop droids, banker droids, nurses, your girlfriend Betty... the whole shebang. You can become a banker and swindle robots of their cash, or a cop and reach cordoned-off areas, or kooky droids like the Stapler. Their purpose in life is to staple but they've become disaffected and wander around Scrapland being a nuisance. They may not seem the best droid to morph into but they're small and great for slipping under people's noses. Then you've got the Functionary droids. These guys can slow time



↑ Morph into an armed cop and everyone will fear you. Look out for pesky Beholders who'll blow your cover though.



↑ Droid jails can't keep Staplers in.



↑ Betty: the newsreading charm of Katrina Blowers.



↑ Become a mad gyroscopic droid and blind everyone that sees you.



↑ You'll be able to counter attack every weapon fired at you - if you're good enough.

» and are great if you need to accomplish missions within a short period. Mayor robots spout political rhetoric and nonsense and can send other robots into standby mode just by speaking to them, and then there's Berto, your best buddy. He's got a spinning, illuminated gyroscope for a stomach. It can illuminate a bright light and blind other droids. There are quite a few characters in there to discover.

But surely that kind of freedom is going to make the game something of a pushover?

Not at all; far from it. A droid choice for one part of a mission might have disastrous consequences for the rest of the mission. You might end up locked in robot jail then have to plan your escape.

So you're talking about a robot version of GTA?

Well, yeah, but then more so. We've got action and adventure in the same vein as GTA, although with a much lighter feel. But, as well as the totally open terrain, we're doing something vastly different with the vehicles. You'll be able to take bits of scrap from the environment and turn them into vehicles. Any combination of parts can be strung together to create any specification of vehicle. You store them

"You'll be able to create craft offline then upload them to the Live multiplayer modes"

on your hard drive and, when you want to use one, you call it up and the environment around you will recreate it. If you want a bruiser to shoot enemies out of the sky you can carry its specs around, just as you can carry a lighter getaway craft with you.

That's going to be great for Live.

Yeah. You'll be able to create craft offline then upload them to the multiplayer modes we've got coming. Live play will only involve the exterior parts of the game, but you'll be able to show off your vehicle, race others, blow them apart, and basically indulge in this huge, sprawling world. You can go for a car armed with rail guns, homing missiles, some crazy shit, but you'll also be able to use counter measures for everything fired at you. For every weapon there's a defence and it's going to be interesting to see how people play out this huge, intelligent battle laid before them.

Finally, tell us about Oz. We heard it's in limbo.

It is coming, but it's on hold. We were in a strange position because publishers no longer want original material - it's all about sequels and film tie-ins. So, when Oz was suspended it was partly because of the lack of faith in its ability to stand alone as a game. Now, with a three movie deal in the pipeline, a film in production, comic books, action figures, the works, the game will finally see the light of day. Only this time we can sell the licence and rights for far more than when we were just a game. It's crazy!

And that's not going to happen with Scrapland?

Oh no, that's covered. We've got merchandising, there's a cartoon series in discussion, film rights, sequels, T-shirts, stickers, badges, comics, books, graphic novels... hell, we've got the lot going on. You will see Scrapland, and if it means going to such lengths to get it out there, then so be it!



↑ Cop droids aren't as tough as they look!

News Wire

Easily digestible nuggets of key Xbox information

Kameo Canned?

With *BC* 'indefinitely delayed', we got a little disheartened this month when we heard that Rare's *Kameo* looked to have gone the same way. The elemental adventure game was said to be put on hold indefinitely, but Rare is eager to let us know that this isn't the case - it's just been delayed to "incorporate several changes and new features."

"We realise this is frustrating in the short term to all those of you avidly following the game's progress and itching to bust some Troll heads, but rest assured that every last one of these new developments is designed to enhance and expand the experience."

Argonaut Bubbles Under

Bad news for developer Argonaut, with the news that it's shutting up shop. This means that emergency services shooter *Roll Call* hangs in the balance, but some comforting, if slightly obscure news came from *Roll Call*'s publisher SCA. The guys there told us that as far as they were concerned, *Roll Call* was still scheduled for a September 2005 release - despite Argonaut's closure. Has the game already been snapped up by another developer? We hope so.

Bio Winners

Congratulations to *Knights of the Old Republic* (Issue 20, 9.5) developer, BioWare. The ground-breaking company, which has been responsible for several stunning games including the forthcoming *Jade Empire*, won the coveted Developer of the Year title at the Digital Entertainment Awards. "This award is truly a testament to the hard work of our entire staff," said Dr Greg Zeschuk, joint CEO of BioWare. "We've got the most talented, creative and original people in the world."

Hit Me Baby One More Time

AGENT 47 WILL soon be back to no good in *Hitman: Blood Money*. The story will see the tables turned on him, as a sleeper suddenly becomes active within his own clandestine ICA organisation. From steamy summer nights in New Orleans to the ancient ruins of old Europe, 47 will have to use every skill he's ever learned if he's to save his skin and uncover the identity of the secret killer. And, we have it on good authority, that he'll no longer scuttle around like a crab. Huzzah!



↑ Agent 47 sets his scope on Xbox again.

Xbox Cleans Up at Joysticks

Our beloved 'box scoops some prize awards at this year's Joysticks

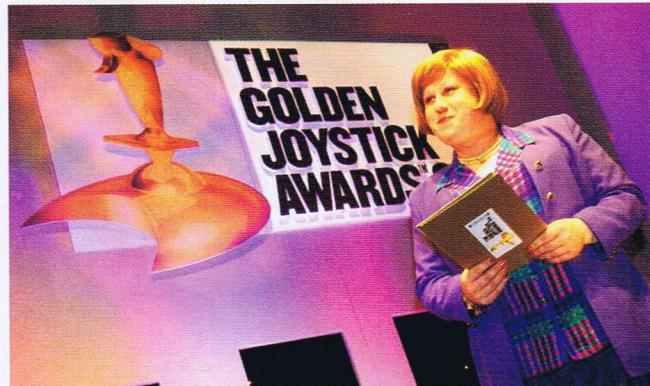
THE GOLDEN Joystick Awards 2004, and Xbox came out shining, as Lionhead's action RPG *Fable* (Issue 32, 9.7) was voted Xbox Game of the Year against stiff competition that included both *Splinter Cell* and *GTA*.

Lionhead's stunning free-roaming RPG wasn't the only accolade to be piled on Xbox-only games. Stunning FPS *The Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay* (Issue 29, 9.1) was voted the Unsung Hero Game of the Year, and rightly so too.

Compere for the evening was English personality Marjorie Dawes, who ended up insulting most of the winners, assaulted a giant Sonic the Hedgehog when he collected his Ultimate Gaming Hero award, and shared various low-fat recipes throughout the evening. But, despite her vitriolic jibes to most of the assembled crowd, the real stars of the Golden Joysticks were Xbox-exclusive and PC games, including *Doom 3* which won Ultimate Game of the Year, with *Fable* coming through again as runner-up.

Gaming icon Warren Spector went on to win the Industry Personality of the Year award, and received a rapturous round of applause from the hundreds of people gathered at the awards. It came as something of a surprise then, when the *Deus Ex* designer quit his post soon after. Maybe he thought he could go no higher once he'd reached Joystick recognition. Who knows?

For a complete list of winners from every category, plus more photos of the event, log on to www.goldenjoystick.com. And remember, come 2005, we expect each and every one of you to vote for a certain Master Chief and his Earth-saving tomfoolery, got it?



↑ Marjorie Dawes, compere extraordinaire and Mr Kipling fan.



↑ Marjorie handed out awards and diet tips all night.

Commandos developer Pyro is already busy at work on a game for Xbox 2. More details soon!



↑ Skydiving gets really dangerous in this game.



↑ Sniping chopper pilots - always pleasant.

Parashooting

Skydiving assassins join Fire For Effect!

MORE NEWS on the forthcoming *CT Special Forces: Fire For Effect* came hurtling our way this month, plus a couple of exclusive screens showing off a juicy new feature.

We knew the third-person shooter would feature the odd skydiving section, but we found out you'll be doing a lot more than simply pulling a cord and screaming your lungs out. There will actually be airborne combat involving firefights and fisticuffs some 6,000 feet above the ground. Not to help matters, enemy aircraft will also fire homing missiles at you as you tumble through the clouds, making the usually serene experience something of an aerial bloodbath.

On the ground meanwhile, we've been treated to a raft of new vehicles including attack choppers and amphibious craft, including the handy hovercraft - ideal for zipping into otherwise inhospitable terrain and over minefields.

Fire For Effect has always promoted itself on the impact the physics engine will have during play, and now we're starting to see what the developer means. With gravity sucking you down while bullets whizz past your head, and with hovercraft introduced as essential tools of the trade, we could be looking at a game that requires as much thought about your choice of tactic as it does about your choice of head popper. Expect interesting things.





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E6670-A

Brothers in Arms

Another WWII FPS, but this time you're not alone

Dev: Gearbox	Pub: Ubisoft
Release: Autumn 2005	Live: 2-4 players
Players: 1-2 Split	
0	Percentage Complete 80 100

NOT TO TAKE anything away from the superb authenticity of *Brothers in Arms*, Gearbox's insistence that it's based on a true story is stretching it a little. In fact, it's a tale of fictional characters dropped into a real and deadly scenario during the aftermath of D-Day in World War II.

There's no training mission, no agonising calm before the storm in boot camp. You take on the role of Sergeant Matt Baker, a veteran soldier of the 101st Airborne Cavalry. The first three missions of the game take place immediately after a harrowing parachute drop into Normandy and your first objective is to regroup with those brave men who were lucky enough to survive.

Going it alone in the first mission gives you enough opportunity to become versed in moving around and aiming with some of the less-than-accurate 1940s rifles and machine-guns. Any weapon you find on the battlefield can be wielded, including a massive selection of German shooters.

It's not until the morning after (the third mission) that you hook up with two other weary warriors and team tactics come into play. The basic concept is the same as *Full Spectrum Warrior* (Issue 28, 8.9) albeit a lot more action-orientated. Simply point the crosshair over an enemy's position and hold down X to command your troops to lay down suppressive fire. A timer icon indicates clearly how much time you have to move and take up a new position before the enemy regains his composure. The ultimate objective is to sneak around and ambush the Axis troops, either shooting them or flushing them out for the others to finish off.

That's not to say this technique works over and over. The AI is realistic and unpredictable enough to move around and take you by surprise when you think you have the upper hand. We were setting up an ambush only to be routed by an unexpected enemy trooper. Totally exposed, the only way to escape was to push forward quickly in Assault mode. Like the suppressive fire command, assaulting a position requires just one button press. Your troops



↑ Your brothers occasionally lob grenades on their own initiative. They'll shout to make sure you're aware of that.

will charge forward all at once, putting themselves in great danger but hopefully being lucky enough to kill the enemy before they take a bullet.

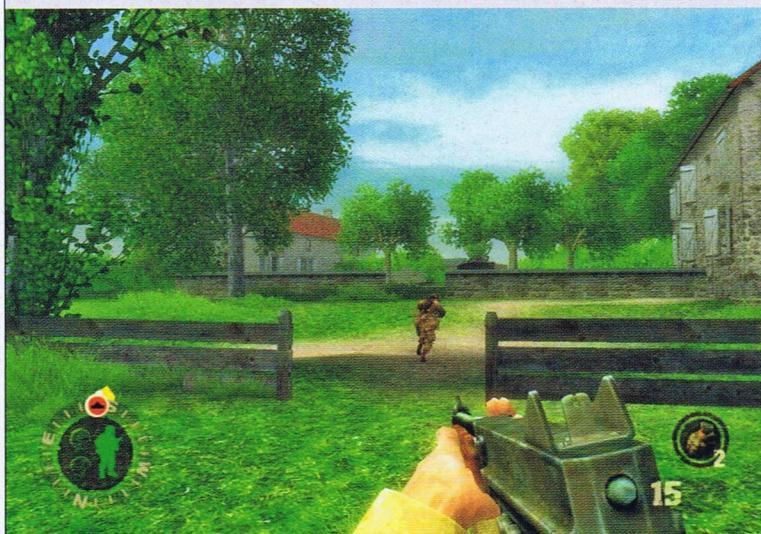
Charging up the battlefield amidst a hail of bullets is a genuinely dramatic experience. It can be a genuinely gory one too, with the arms and legs of your enemies blown clean off and strewn over the deceptively picturesque countryside.

We can't wait to take *Brothers in Arms* online. Several special missions have been created especially for two-vs-two games. It won't be a simple case of fragging the hell out of each other - there are specially tailored mission objectives for each map.

Despite having played a huge number of World War II-themed titles recently, we have to admit that *Brothers in Arms* is the most authentic, not to mention the best looking. Most of all, we anticipate that its heavy emphasis on story and characters will raise it way above the usual grind of unconvincing WWII franchises.



↑ Use the sight view to increase accuracy. The guns are hard to aim.



↑ It almost looks too beautiful to be a war game.



↑ Send your men ahead with just one press of the X button.

Alien Hunter

Pah! Who needs Covenants and Spartans, eh?!

IT'S BEEN delayed, but we can't wait to play Midway's alien apocalypse shooter, *Area 51*. We recently discovered more about its Live features: as well as the usual flag-capturing skullduggery, there's an interesting new mode called the Alien Mutant Team Deathmatch. Taking the idea of death-matches and spinning it on its head, human fighters will go up against aliens in the knowledge that one touch could kill them. *Area 51* features a virus that turns humans into alien hybrids, so we could see members of our own team turn into the enemy mid-match. This, thankfully, will be a fairly slow

process, during which the player goes through several evolutionary stages. They will be able to use alien strength and vision against the invaders until finally succumbing to the sickness.

Up to 16 players will be able to play online through several of *Area 51*'s environments. Autopsy rooms, laboratories, docking bays and warehouses with rapid-firing mounted machine-guns will all be up for grabs, as will alien weaponry. It's due for release in summer 2005, and hopefully the *Halo* 2 craze will have died down a little by then to grant *Area 51* some breathing space. It deserves it.



↑ Nobody say *Halo* 2, nobody say *Halo* 2! Oh, okay then. Say dual wielding and be happy with it.



↑ Nobody say *Doom* 3, nobody say *Doom* 3! Oh bugger, we just did.



↑ Nobody say *Rainbow Six*! Actually, it doesn't look anything like it.

Bruno Bonnell has stepped down from his CEO position at Atari. Stepping into the role of President and CEO is former music exec, James Caparro.

Flame-grilled Phoenix

Is this the best-looking online brawler yet?

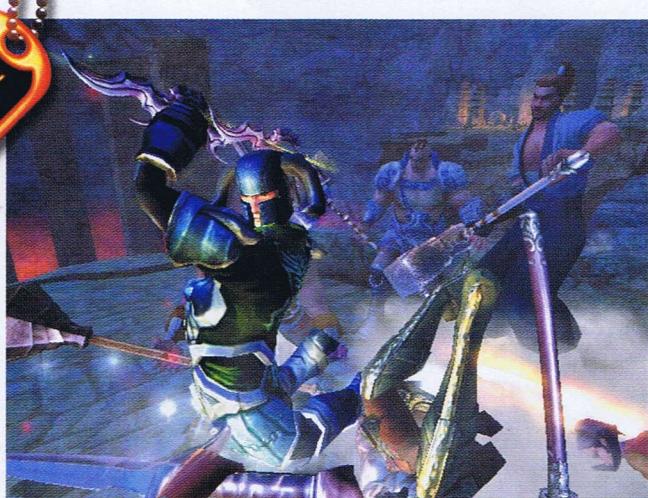
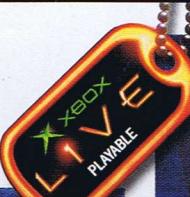
TAKE A PEEK and feel free to drool. *Iron Phoenix* is a Live 3.0-supporting fist-fest where necks snap, egos are shattered and reputations are built. Due out in the spring, it's a 16-player skull-splitter set in a variety of arenas, but with a twist.

The path to success will require co-operation with other fighters. We'll have to form allegiances because, with a partner, *Iron Phoenix* allows multiple combos to be unleashed. Killer combos can only be formed with help, so it pays to buddy up with the strongest contestant in the ring. This may sound as though people will only end up choosing the hard characters, but the developer, Sammy, assures us otherwise. Every fighter will be equally strong; the chance of success will rely on the weapon we equip ourselves with. The greater the weapon, the greater the chance of having someone team with our character for success. There'll be nine in total, each enabling the holder to imbue them with special strike powers, range attacks and combo options.

But it's not all neck-slashing and murdering once you're in a killer tag-team. A range of super martial arts disciplines will be employed, from super-human *Matrix*-style judo to high-flying wire-fu. Sammy is also really trying to encourage intense competition, so it's concentrating on making clan access and tournament hosting as easy as possible. As easy as getting your head cleaved off no doubt...



↑ Deadly if inserted in the wrong places.



↑ The bigger the weapon, the bigger the wallop it packs.



↑ Choose weapons wisely...



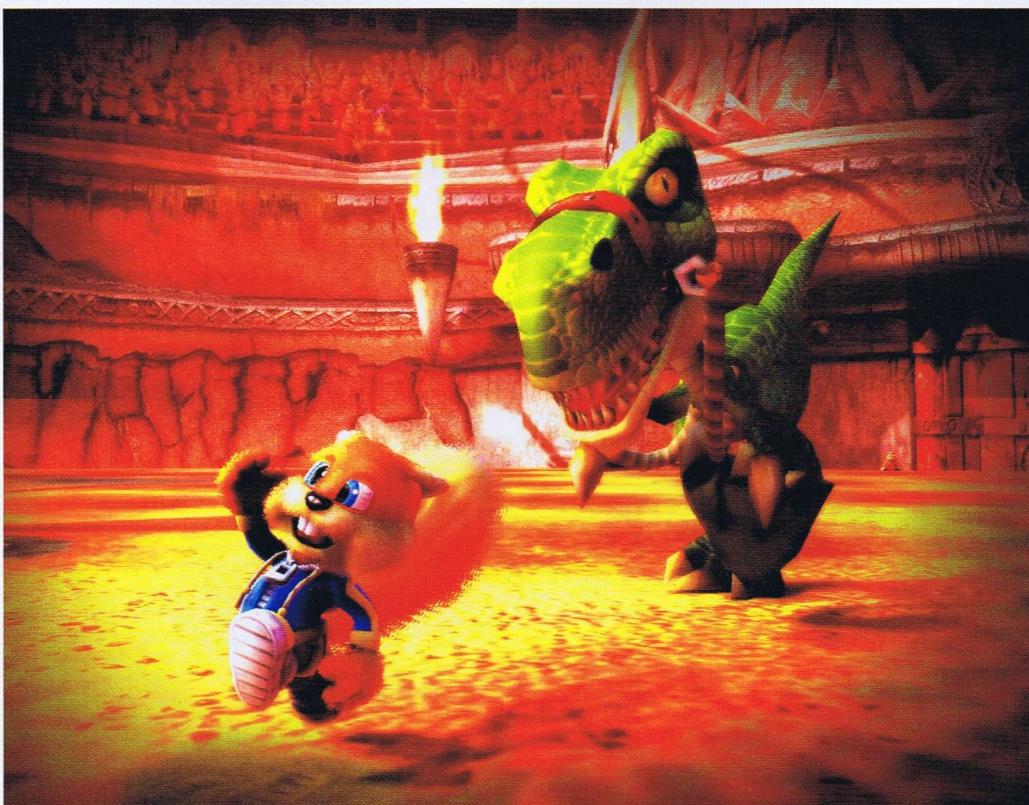
↑ ...choose your team-mates wisely...



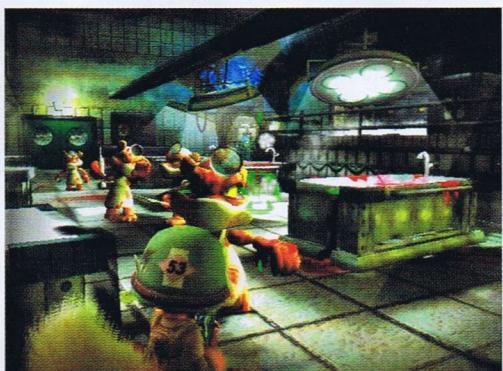
↑ ...then get out there and kill!

Conker: Live and Reloaded

DEVELOPER: RARE PUBLISHER: MICROSOFT RELEASE DATE: MAR 2005



↑ Conker: Live and Reloaded has got Vietnam elements, but that doesn't mean you won't find the odd dinosaur.



↑ Storm an enemy hospital and find surgeons cutting open your comrades. This never happened in Spyro, did it?



↑ Conker isn't for kids. The squirrel goes to war and when you decapitate someone blood squirts out of their neck!

Punisher

DEVELOPER: THQ PUBLISHER: VOLITION RELEASE DATE: FEB 2005



↑ You'll be given numerous ways to end your enemies' lives, most of which will be horribly brutal.



↑ Not only will Frank Castle slowly torture his victims, but he'll also blow them to pieces with this handy little thing.

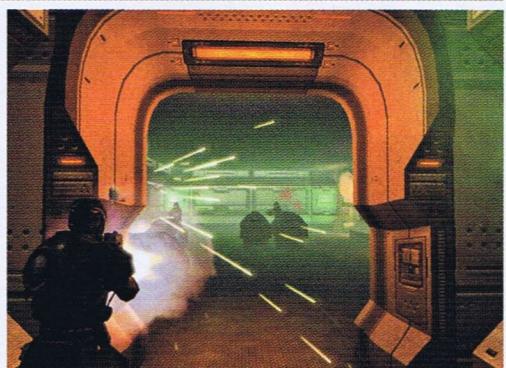
↑ A new take on laser surgery: if they don't answer your questions, slowly cut them in half. *Mwahahaha!*

Pariah

DEVELOPER: DIGITAL EXTREMES PUBLISHER: HIP INTERACTIVE RELEASE DATE: TBA 2005



↑ New shots of *Pariah* show it's shaping up to be something of a doozy. We really like the headshots and blood splats!



↑ Crowded firefights will see you trying to find a cure for your disease while the authorities close in to destroy you.



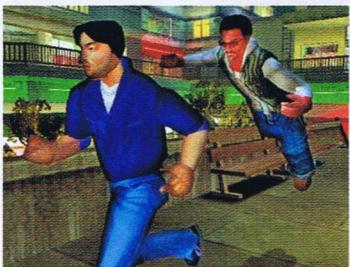
↑ This guy is from the Water Clan team, an infected gang with bloodthirsty ambitions for survival.

NARC

DEV: MIDWAY PUB: MIDWAY
RELEASE DATE: AUTUMN 2005



↑ It's a hard job defusing bombs but someone's got to do it.



↑ Shoot crims, or launch yourself into the air like a slo-mo rugby player.



↑ All the protective clothing in the world won't help you in a blast like this.

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TV/Film	Chart/Best Sellers
Film - Kill Bill 56843	55868 D12 - How Come
Theme - Pop Idol 52424	59123 Jet - Cold Hard Bitch
Theme - Benny Hill 50092	59228 Eminem - Just Lose It
Theme - Magnum PI 59002	59171 Robbie Williams - Radio
Theme - Neighbours 50204	52664 Christina Aguilera - Car Wash
Film - 2 Fast 2 Furious 92326	59130 Jo Jo - Leave Get out
Theme - The Simpson's 50054	56930 Usher - Confessions
Theme - Sex And The City 55076	94316 Joel Turner - These Kids
Film - Mission Impossible 50013	56920 Nelly - My Place
Theme - The Great Escape 55166	59057 The Streets - Dry your eyes

Dance	R'n'B
Groove Armada - I see you baby 56950	59035 Usher - Burn
Fat Boy Slim - slash dot dash 59159	56948 Brandy - Afrodisiac
Dannii Minogue - You won't forget 56980	56754 Jay Z - 99 problems
Arman Van Helden - Hear my name 56888	56935 Destiny's Child - Loose my Breath
N Trance - Set you free 56974	55823 Beyonce - Naughty Girl
Prodigy - girls 50132	56919 Jamelia - DJ
Fat Boy Slim - Gangster Tripping 90167	90135 Destiny's Child - Independent
The Streets - Blinded by the lights 59168	55775 Usher - Confessions
Solitaire - I'm thinking of you 94313	90032 Brandy - What about us
Kylie Minogue - Slow 57212	55768 Missy Elliot - Im really hot

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X-Media

 Latest DVD, Cinema, On-line and Music edited by James Cotttee.

PO38 X-DVD
50 whole extra minutes for the Lord of the Rings!

PO39 X-CINEMA
The Incredibles are blasting their way into cinemas.

PO39 X-TOYS
Every gamer loves a big screen. Without fail.

PO40 PHOTOSHOP PHUNNIES
Got funny images from the web? Send them to us!

PO40 X-WEB
Fab bookmarks to visit and pass the time.

PO41 X-ANIME
"Soaring high in the sky, he may be small but only in size..."

X-DVD



LOTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING: EXTENDED EDITION

RRP \$59.95 RATING M15+

FOR A THIRD YEAR running, the DVD release of Peter Jackson's version of Tolkien's classic has given us a terrible choice: do we buy the theatrical version as soon as it comes out, or wait until Christmas for the extended cut? Or get both? Those who shell out for this immaculately packaged collection will be treated to a treasure trove of extras: four

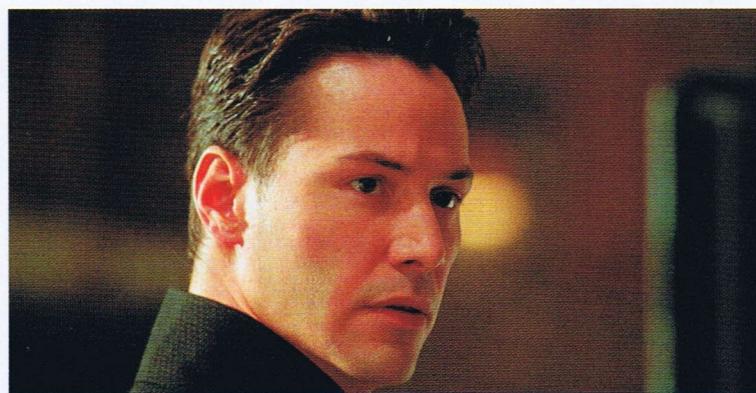
commentary tracks (from the writers, designers, technicians and actors), hours of documentaries, oodles of picture galleries and other interactive treats.

The extended cut itself has all manner of unexpected surprises, like Legolas and Gimli getting into a drinking contest, the over-the-top death of Saruman, a tidal wave of skulls,

and more pure exploitation to sate the eyes. Literary fans will get something far more valuable in the documentaries, in which Jackson & Co. explain in detail exactly why they changed the way the One Ring was destroyed, left out The Scouring of the Shire, and their other innumerable changes to the work. Whether you felt they preserved the

essential message of *The Lord of the Rings* or drowned it in treacle, you're sure to get your fill of documentary post-mortem.

Peter Jackson even jokes that you'll have to go out and buy an anniversary edition in 25 years time! Let's hope we don't have to make any more difficult choices between now and then...



ULTIMATE MATRIX COLLECTION

RRP \$99.95 RATING M15+

SO, THEY'VE FINALLY done it. A DVD special edition pack has hit double digits, with ten (10) extras-laden platters available in regular and overblown collectors' versions. This may be a supreme indulgence for most readers, but if you know someone who gets this set be sure to listen to the critics'

commentary tracks for the two *Matrix* sequels. Three highbrow film critics are in stitches all the way through, choking back tears of laughter! The *Animatrix* disc also has a decent selection of extra materials, and there are hours and hours of brand new featurettes on the nuts and bolts of this widely misunderstood trilogy.

THE BEYOND

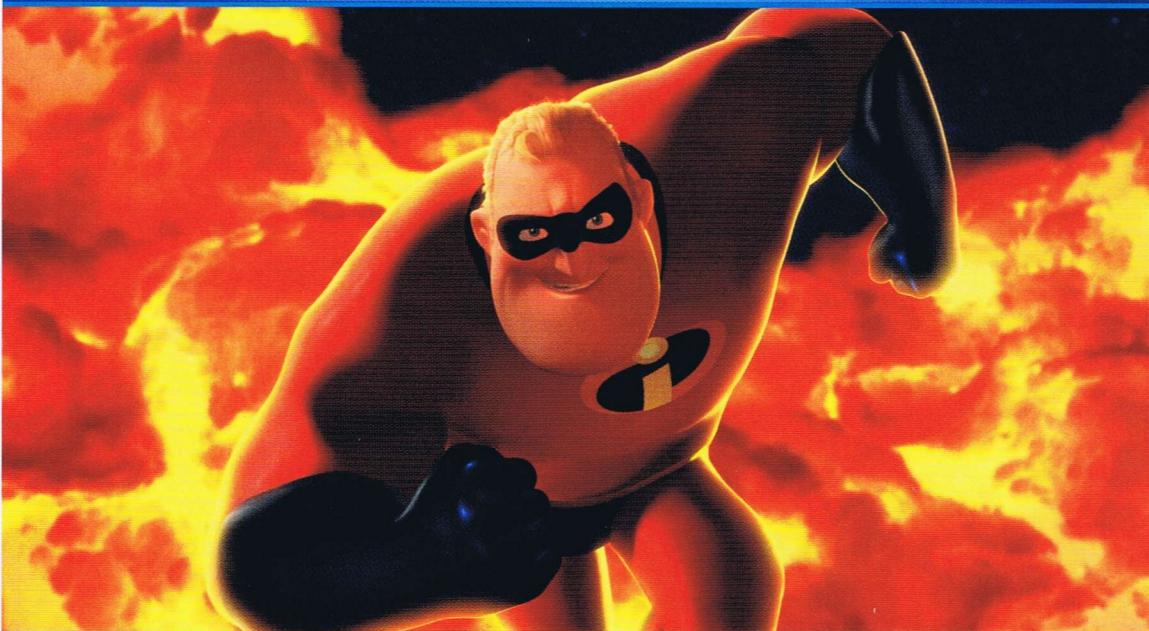
RRP \$29.95 RATING R18+

CHEESY ELECTRONIC MUSIC, zombies, tarantulas, blood, guts, and badly dubbed dialogue and Foley effects; could this be anything other than an Italian horror film from the '70s? From the vivid imagination of Lucio Fulci, this is equal parts H. P. Lovecraft and *Silent Hill*, with a hint of Vampyros Lesbos. The ponderous,

dream-like plot concerns a young woman who inherits a spooky old hotel, unwittingly opening one of seven fabled gates to Hell! Hailed as a triumph of the trash horror genre, the extreme violence and haunting direction of *The Beyond* still has the power to take you away to a dark, doomed dimension of dread.



X-CINEMA



↑ "Heeeere I come to save the daaaaay!"

THE INCREDIBLES

Get lost, Spider-Man. We've got a new hero.

WE'RE VERY, VERY excited about this film. It manages to make a strong case for tort law reform, challenges the ant-like mindset of political correctness, and still manages to tell a rollicking superhero story in lavish 3D animation. It's the latest from Pixar, too, which means that it pushes the state of the art into bold new territory - and makes it look easy.

It's the story of Mr. Incredible, or as society knows him, "Bob Parr." Once a mighty superhero dedicated to fighting crime and the forces of evil, he's been forced to abandon his altruistic lifestyle by frivolous lawsuits. Now he works in an office cubicle, toiling under

the eye of a perfidious worm of a boss, doing the exact opposite of helping those in need: he's an insurance claims adjuster. His wife, son and daughter have super powers too, but social prejudice forces them to bottle up their true potential. It takes a huge toll on all of them, until a threat emerges that only their talents can handle...

It's very, very hard to imagine someone not liking *The Incredibles*. A finely crafted work of wit, poignancy, and 60s retro style, it's already shaping up to be a classic of animation, and of the medium of film itself. At the very least, you'll have fun, and at today's theatres that's quite a feat.

X-TOYS

IRIVER H340 MP3 PLAYER

RRP \$799

ONE OF THE first in the new model MP3 players with a colour screen display, this unit has one very serious problem: the colour screen (which only views jpgs and bmps) sucks up the battery extra quick. Fortunately it pumps out decent sound, but at \$799, you'd expect it to do more.



INFOCUS X2 DLP PROJECTOR

RRP \$2399

THE NEWEST MODEL in Infocus' range DLP projectors is a real bang-for-buck performer that's great for home movies and gaming. The fan's a bit noisy (just remedy that by turning up the volume), but the two-speed colour wheel might cause a rainbow effect for some.

X-AUDIO

COURTESY OF SHOCK RECORDS



FRANK BLACK FRANCIS

A DOUBLE DISC collection aimed squarely at the Frank Black enthusiast. The first disc holds early demo recordings from the '80s, and the second is filled with remixes of hits like "Wave of Mutilation." Between the two we can extrapolate the full impact of his career, defining an indie sound that reverberates to this day. Dark. Moody.



KAADA PATTON ROMANCES

A CURIOUS AURAL dalliance between St. Germain style museum foyer music and atomic age stratospheric lounge. Experimental, varied, and at times quite silly, this is nonetheless pleasant, an ethereal throwback to an age when it was normal to have an electronic organ in the home. Plus warbling, wacky vocals for good measure.



LIL JON & THE EAST SIDE BOYZ CRUNK JUICE

THE MUSIC OF anger continues to evolve as the screaming milieu of Crunk reaches new heights of, er, excellence. This is the sort of CD that belongs in a time capsule. Print out a sworn statement to the effect that this was the most beloved album of our age, seal it away, and come 2105 some future archeologists will be utterly boggled.



SUPERHEIST NEW, RARE & LIVE

ROCK, ROLL, AND rock some more with this double disc set of Aussie heavy metal outfit Superheist. Listen to tales of oppression and woe from these Metallica sound-alikes, or simply let the guitars wash over you. While packaged as an offering to the hardcore, this omnibus is also an apt starting point for the Superheist-curious.

X-WEB

NSA KIDS & YOUTH

Coloring Book

Choose a picture to print and color. When you are ready to print, click your browser's print button.

Menu

- What NSA/CSS Does
- National Cryptologic Museum
- NSA/CSS History Timeline
- Field Trips & Scavenger Hunts
- NSA and CSS Seals
- Codes & Ciphers
- NSA/CSS K-9 Patrol
- Games & Puzzles
- Coloring Book
- More Kids Pages

NSA/CSS Home

Bombe Intercept

United States Flag NSA Seal

CRYPTO THE CAT

www.nsa.gov/kids

OKAY, THIS IS a little weird. You know the NSA, that ultra-secretive US government agency that Sam Fisher works for in the *Splinter Cell* stealth action games? Well, back during the Clinton administration, every body of the US government was ordered to become more touchy-feely, and that included the clandestine NSA. The result is this kid-friendly website, full of fun facts about the top-secret spy outfit. You can try some brain-teasers, learn how to make codes of your own, and even print out and colour-in the NSA's mascot, Crypto Cat! The heart-warming photos of the agency's attack dogs are a little worrying, though.

ASMA

2004-Jul-15: I read a minor issue in the archive directory tree and does. Never worth re-downloading. (→) The archive is growing for another archive mirror, the asma-cachy.org. Only mirror is the most important now.

2004-Nov-15: ASMA 2.8 is born! It's been a long journey, but the whole collection now contains 1840 tunes. Moreover, the archive is now 10 MB (→). Oh, the a new version of Delphine was also uploaded to the PLAYERS section.

2005-Nov-26: SAP 0.99MS plugin was updated to version 0.99MS. Some bugfixes. Get it in the PLAYERS section.

2005-Nov-17: ASMA 2.7 - 124 new songs, no more word! Few, some player updates can be found in the PLAYERS section.

HOME SONGS PLAYERS TOOLS FAQ LINKS

Welcome to the pages of the biggest and only official Atari XL/XE music archive. Many of you chose great square-wave sounds and noises, that often belonged to your childhood. → The archive contains over 1800 songs (the number rises - see the diagram below) including both old-time and from the early 80's till the latest 2004 contributions. As the tunes are in original binary form (no N, you will need a special player. Check the PLAYERS section and choose the one that fits your needs. Version 2.8 is now available. It's a major update, when we created the archive - it was looking less like the Voltage SID Collection - the ultimate CS4 music archive. Now you can download the archive and listen to the unforgettable sounds of the 8-bit Atari.

The progress of the growth of the archive

Music archive downloads

Atari SAP Music Archive - zipped version

Atari SAP Music Archive - CAB version

Latest release of the ASMA collection. This version (v2.8) (25-07-04)

If you're working under Windows, you may save some download time by getting this version of the archive with the same content but smaller size.

ATARI SAP MUSIC ARCHIVE

asma.dspaudio.com

IT'S HARD TO pin the aesthetic of old video game tunes. It's not retro because they can be catchy even if you've never heard them before. It's hardly electronica, as they were created on the primitive music chip of the Atari XL & XE computers. What is certain is that if you've ever found yourself involuntarily humming a tune, you'll probably get something out of this resource. Includes music by famous C64 composers such as Rob Hubbard, as well as useful software including a Winamp plug-in to listen to .SAP files.



PAPER BASKET GAME

gprime.net/game/paper.php

IT'S SIMPLE. IT'S stupidly simple. But it's addictive, and that's all that matters in a catchy web game. "Cyrkam Airtos" is a game where you must perform two fluid actions in quick succession: you must catch a paper ball being thrown at you, then you must toss it into a nearby bin. The first task is simple enough; you move your virtual hand into the path of the ball, and click to catch. The second part is a lot harder, in that you have to wind up a simulated over-arm shot and release at exactly the right moment to arc the ball to its final resting place. For extra points, knock down paper planes. Simple, stupid fun.

X-PHOTOSHOP PHUNNIES

MORGAN FREEMAN

Some of the hype surrounding *Half-Life 2* is finally dying down, and while it's obviously a landmark in gaming history, it's not the immaculate conception that it was first made out to be. Item management could have been smoother, for one thing, and squad management is a joke. Speculation now abounds on whether it'll make it to Xbox, or get pushed back to Xbox 2. If the console lands in late '05 as predicted, it'd make a killer launch title. And what if they made a *Half-Life* movie - who would play Gordon Freeman. Perhaps Morgan Freeman? Or could that get a little confusing? "Lord Knutt" from the b3ta forums doesn't think so; that much is certain.

[B3ta.com](http://www.b3ta.com)



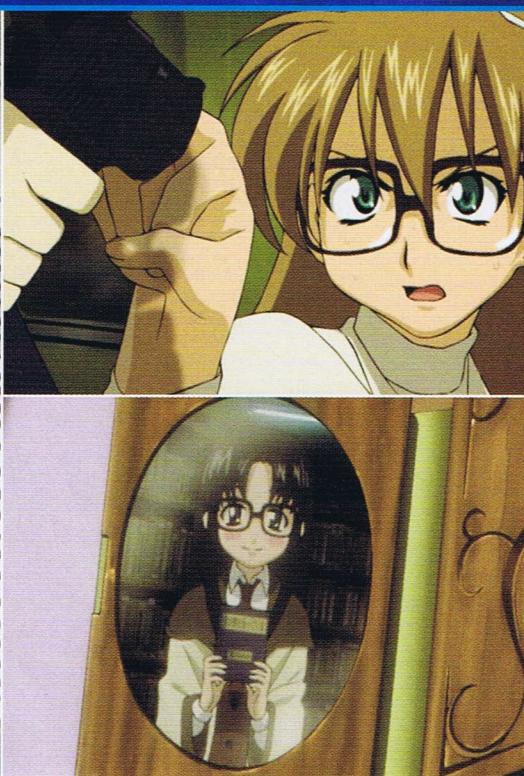
HELLO WORLD

Anyone who's ever tried their hand at computer programming has to pass that first challenge: the "Hello World" program. In writing some code that spells out "Hello World" on the screen, you've leaped the biggest hurdle: getting your compiler to work properly. Everything after that is downhill, really. The exact text doesn't have to be Hello World, of course. It could be anything: "I am 1337," "Latham is a big baby," or even "The Matrix Has You." Internet denizen "rogan" is making some sort of statement here, possibly about the sophistication of modern cinema.

www.somethingawful.com

EVERY MONTH, WE scour cyberspace for the latest in photo-manipulated videogame humour. If you find a picture worthy of *Photoshop Phunnies*, or better yet, if you've made one yourself, send it to us at staff@oxm.com.au with the subject "Photoshop Phunnies", and you could see your name featured in Australia's *Official Xbox Magazine*!

X-ANIME

**R.O.D. THE TV**

RRP \$29.95 RATING M15+

READ OR DIE has been one of the great unexpected successes of the anime industry, a preposterous story of a young woman with the power to manipulate paper into any shape, as if by magic. The three-episode straight-to-video series was released on a single disc in 2003 to much fan fervour. Now the spin-off television series is here, offering

more of the same. The essential aspects of the show are intact: highly imaginative fight sequences involving polymorphic paper, and character development built on simmering lesbian undertones. Whether the latter is meant as metaphor is irrelevant: if it's fan service you're after, you're in for one very sexy show.

Only the details have changed. This seven-volume series introduces not one but three Paper Masters - Anita, Maggie & Michelle - whose sisterly squabbles have a detrimental effect on their business as international detectives. They've been assigned to guard a reclusive tomboy of an author called Nenene, and when they're not

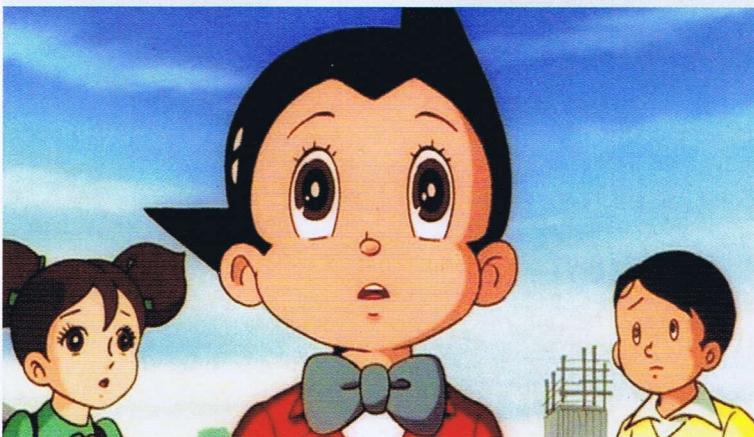
mispronouncing her name they're either fawning over her or screwing up her life. Domestic squabbles, cute girls, mad bombers, and an ongoing story that involves hunting rare books: that's *R.O.D. The TV*. Also available with a jumbo book-like binder to hold the series, should you wish to collect it.

ASTRO BOY DELUXE COLLECTION

RRP \$199.95 RATING G

AFTER ALL THE razzle-dazzle of the new *Astro Boy* episodes has soaked in, this old series from 1982 seems almost quaint by comparison. It does excel in some key areas compared to the newer version, though, including accuracy in translation, quality of the voice acting, and believability. The pacing is much better

too - you actually have a chance to absorb information and really get into the stories. Very much a blast from the past for older anime fans, this series still has the power to amuse and delight young children, especially with its frank discussion of issues like racism and death. Some novel extras, too.

**CHRONO CRUSADE**

RRP \$29.95 RATING PG

IN AN ALTERNATE history 1928, America's pre-crash well-to-do have discovered a fascinating new hobby: Satanism. With unspeakable demonic creatures spilling forth into our world, an elite order of Catholic battle nuns has its hands full blasting these monsters back to hell. Their top agent is Rosette, and her

partner in crime-fighting is Chrono, a mild-mannered youngster who also happens to be a devil himself. While not terribly bound by historical accuracy, *Chrono Crusade* does benefit from outrageous action sequences, plenty of damsels, and more than a little sexual tension between the two stars.

Charts

The ten best-selling games in Australia



1

HALO 2Dev: Bungie
Pub: Microsoft

Bungie's masterpiece rockets straight to the top of the charts upon release. If you haven't completed it, you must be mad. If you have, finish it on Legendary and then take on the world over Xbox Live.



2

NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2

Dev: EA Pub: EA

Free-form hip-hop underground racing is the winning formula for racing games this generation. Get into it while it's hot.



3

NFS UNDERGROUND CLASSIC

Dev: EA Pub: EA

The sequel is in second place, but the original is running a close third thanks to EA changing its retail price to a much more affordable \$50.



4

FABLE

Dev: Lionhead Pub: Microsoft

Lionhead's supreme character-building exercise slips down the chart but still promises a better life than the one you're leading.



5

MORTAL KOMBAT: DECEPTION

Dev: Midway Pub: Midway

Surely you must've seen the bus ads shuffling along through the streets of Sydney - it's all about the puzzles and board games, baby!



6

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON 2

Dev: Ubisoft Pub: Ubisoft

Tom Clancy's tactical shoot 'em up series hits its mark with the fans with an all-new third-person perspective to play from.



7

CRASH TWINSANITY

Dev: Travellers Tales Pub: Vivendi Universal

The unstoppable upright marsupial 'crashes' its way into the topsellers charts to be mentioned in the same breathe as *Halo 2*.



8

SHREK 2

Dev: Luxoflux Pub: Activision

We'd buy this game too, if just to laugh at how much Princess Fiona looks like the ex-fiancee of a certain Aussie tennis star.

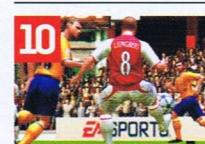


9

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005

Dev: EA Pub: EA

The art of Tiger Proofing double bogeys since last month, but with all these features and twiddly fun bits to chip, there's no time for nose-picking.



10

FIFA FOOTBALL 2005

Dev: EA Pub: EA

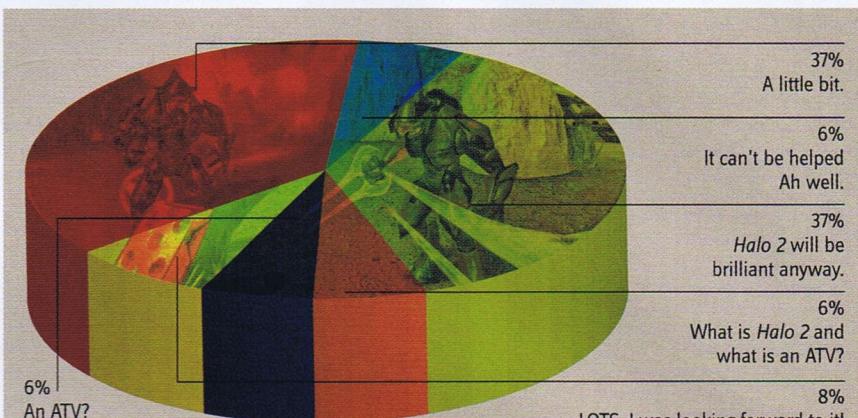
Playing more like *PES* than its forefathers, with beautiful character rendition and the fantastic addition of Xbox Live play. This year's *FIFA* rocks.



The hot topic

You answer the burning question...

How much will the lack of an ATV (All-Terrain Vehicle) affect *Halo 2*?



Miraculously the sequel to the revolutionary FPS offers even more multiplayer action and eradicates the slight monotony of the campaign missions, but the ATV quad bike has been hastily removed from the final cut, much to our despair. Still, there's plenty more where that came from.

TO VOTE ON the hot topic, visit the OAXM forum at www.derwenthoward.com.au and post in any of the 'Hot Topic' polls you'll find in the threads there.

Your most wanted



↑ TO VOTE FOR your favourite upcoming game, email us at staff@oxm.com.au with subject line 'MW', or make your feelings known at our forum at www.derwenthoward.com.au.

1 **DOOM 3**

Dev: Vicarious Visions/id Pub: Activision Release: March 2005

2 **HALF-LIFE 2**

Dev: Valve Software Pub: Vivendi Universal Release: TBA 2005

3 **SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY**

Dev: Ubisoft Montreal Pub: Ubisoft Release: March 2005

4 **FORZA MOTORSPORT**

Dev: Microsoft Pub: Microsoft Release: February 2005

5 **STAR WARS KOTOR II: THE SITH LORDS**

Dev: Obsidian Entertainment Pub: LucasArts Release: February 2005

6 **BROTHERS IN ARMS**

Dev: Gearbox Software Pub: Ubisoft Release: March 2005

7 **STAR WARS: REPUBLIC COMMANDO**

Dev: LucasArts Pub: LucasArts Release: March 2005

8 **UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP 2: THE LIANDRI CONFLICT**

Dev: Epic Games Pub: Midway Release: February 2005

9 **ROGUE TROOPER**

Dev: Rebellion Pub: Sci Release: TBA 2005

10 **COMMANDOS STRIKE FORCE**

Dev: Pyro Studios Pub: Eidos Release: Autumn 2005

OUR SHOUT



Delayed but not forgotten, *Chaos Theory* is now poised for Ubisoft's re-tweaking and the new co-op modes and online support should easily allow Fisher to re-emerge from under *Halo 2*'s shadow to become March's biggest success.

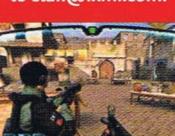
Xbox Game Releases

The forthcoming games you need to know about

DATE	GAME	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	ISSUE
Summer 04	Lemony Snicket	Activision	Activision	n/a
	Miami Vice	Davilex games	TBA	N/A
	Outlaw Golf 2	Hypnotix	Take-Two	N/A
	Snowblind	Crystal Dyn.	Eidos	31
	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2	Konami	Konami	31
	Trivial Pursuit: Unhinged	Artech	Atari	25
Autumn 05	25 To Life	Avalanche	Eidos	N/A
	Advent Rising	Majesco	Vivendi Univ.	20
	Area 51	Midway	Midway	29
	Close Combat: First to Fight	Destineer	Take-Two	31
	Commandos Strike Force	Pyro	Eidos	36
	Conker: Live & Reloaded	Rare	Microsoft	31
	CT Special Forces: Fire For Effect	Light & Shadow Pr.	Hip Interactive	N/A
	Dead or Alive Ultimate	Tecmo	Microsoft	31
	Delta Force: Black Hawk Down	TBA	Novalogic	30
	Destroy All Humans	Pandemic	THQ	33
	Doom 3	id Software	Activision	30
	FIFA Street	EA BIG	EA	36
	Forgotten Realms: Demon Stone	Stormfront	Atari	34
	Forza Motorsport	Microsoft	Microsoft	31
	Freedom Force Vs The Third Reich	Initial	TBA	35
	Get On Da Mic	Eidos	Eidos	N/A
	Gungriffon	Kama	Tecmo	N/A
	Iron Phoenix	Sammy	Sammy	N/A
	Jade Empire	BioWare	Microsoft	31
	King Arthur	Konami	Konami	N/A
	King of Fighters 2003/2004	SNK	THQ	N/A
	Mercenaries	Pandemic	LucasArts	28
	Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	Take-Two	Take-Two	N/A
	NARC	Midway	Midway	28
	Otogi 2	From Soft.	Sega	N/A
	Pariah	Digital Ext.	Hip Interactive	34
	Playboy: The Mansion	Arush	Ubisoft	33
	Predator: Concrete Jungle	Eurocom	Vivendi Univ.	32
	Project Zero 2: Crimson Butterfly	Tecmo	N/A	
	Pure Pinball	Iridon	Iridon	33
	Red Ninja: End of Honour	Tranji	Vivendi Univ.	33
	Scarface	Radical Games	Vivendi Univ.	34
	Scrapland	Mercury Stream	TBA	35
	Sonic Mega Collection Plus	Sega	Sega	36
	Splitter Cell: Chaos Theory	Ubisoft	Ubisoft	32
	Star Wars: Republic Commando	LucasArts	EA	34
	Starcraft: Ghost	Blizzard	Vivendi Univ.	23
	The Punisher	Volition	THQ	32
	TimeSplitters Future Perfect	Free Radical	EA	33
	Torque	Garage Games	JoWood	N/A
	Tron 2.0: Killer App	Climax LA	Disney	31
	World Racing 2	TDK	TDK	N/A
Winter 05	100 Bullets	TBA	TBA	32
	ATV Quad Power Racing 3	Climax	TBA	N/A
	Batman Begins	Eurocom	EA	37
	Battlefield: Modern Conflict	EA	EA	N/A
	Battlestations: Midway	Mithis	Sci	34
	Call of Cthulhu	TBA	Headfirst	32
	Cold Fear	Ubisoft	Ubisoft	N/A
	Cold Winter	Swordfish Stu.	Vivendi Univ.	N/A
	Constantine	Bits Studios	Sci	35
	Dancing Stage Fusion	Konami	Konami	N/A
	Darkwatch	Sammy	Sammy	N/A
	Dead to Rights 2: Hell to Pay	Namco	Namco	36
	Emergency Mayhem	TBA	TBA	30
	Fahrenheit	Quantic Dream	Vivendi Univ.	18
	Freedom Fighters 2	IO Interactive	EA	N/A
	Half-Life 2	Valve	Vivendi Univ.	32
	Hitman: Blood Money	IO Interactive	Eidos	37
	Justice League	Trav. Tales	Midway	N/A
	MechAssault 2	Day 1	Microsoft	27
	Medal of Honor: Dogs of War	EA	EA	N/A
	Metal Slug 4 & 5	SNK	SNK	N/A

THE WISH LIST

DESPITE US providing the most comprehensive release schedule around, we all know game release dates change quicker than Andy's hairstyle. Tell us what you're really waiting for - send your top five to staff@fxmi.com.



WE'LL HAVE an in-depth look at *Rainbow Six 4* next issue. Until then, check out the news on page 014. This time around things get very nasty for the Rainbow guys as terrorists learn to fight them at their own game. Prepare for an epic battle the likes of which the team has yet to experience.



STUBBS is looking great. It's good to see the brains behind *Halo* stretching out in different directions and developing something unique. How many other games let you fight a demonic barber shop quartet as a love-sick zombie?

DATE	GAME	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	ISSUE
	Miami Vice	Atomic Planet	Davilex	N/A
	Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks	Midway	Midway	37
	MotoGP 3	Climax	THQ	32
	MX Vs ATV Unleashed	THQ	THQ	36
	NBA Street V3	NuFX	EA	N/A
	Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath	Oddworld In.	EA	32
	Painkiller	Dreamcatcher	Mandscape	N/A
	Psychonauts	Double Fine	Microsoft	6
	Rogue Trooper	Sci	Sci	34
	Sid Meier's Pirates!	Furaxis	Atari	34
	Sniper Elite	Rebellion	TBA	12
	SNK Vs. Capcom Chaos	SNK Playmore	SNK Playmore	N/A
	Spikeout: Battle Street	Sega	Sega	36
	Star Wars Episode III	LucasArts	LucasArts	N/A
	Stolen	Hip Interactive	TBA	33
	The Bard's Tale	InXile	TBA	23
	The Incredible Hulk	Radical	Vivendi Univ.	N/A
	The Movies	Lionhead	Activision	16
	The Roots	Cenega	Cenega	29
	Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 4	Ubisoft Montreal	Ubisoft	37
	Tork	Tiwak	Ubisoft	4
	WWE Wrestlemania XXI	THQ	TBA	N/A
Summer 05	American McGee's Oz	Carbon6	TBA	27
	Armada 2	TBA	Metro	4
	BC	Intrepid Ent.	Microsoft	31
	Big Mutha Truckers 2	Empire	Empire	N/A
	BloodRayne 2	Majesco	TBA	N/A
	Burnout 4	Criterion	EA	36
	Breed	Brat Designs	CDV	N/A
	Chronos	Saber 3D	TBA	N/A
	Dead or Alive 4: Code Cronus	Tecmo	Microsoft	N/A
	Drake of the 99 Dragons	Majesco	Vivendi Univ.	N/A
	Duality	Trilobyte Gr.	Phantagram	4
	FX Racing	Milestone	TBA	23
	Goblin Commander 2	Jaleco	N/A	N/A
	Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas	Rockstar North	Rockstar	N/A
	Johnny Whatever	Warthog	TBA	N/A
	Kameo: Elements of Power	Rare	Microsoft	33
	Karaoke Revolution 3	Konami	Harmonix	N/A
	King Kong	Ubisoft Montreal	Ubisoft	36
	Loose Cannon	Digital Anvil	Ubisoft	4
	Magatama	Microsoft	Microsoft	23
	Masters of the Universe	Savage	TDK	N/A
	Neverend	Mayhem	TBA	N/A
	Nightmare Creatures 3	Ubisoft	Ubisoft	N/A
	Notorious: Die to Drive	Ubisoft	Ubisoft	N/A
	Perfect Dark Zero	Rare	Microsoft	10
	Phantom Dust	Microsoft	Microsoft	23
	Pilot Down	Wide Games	Wanadoo	N/A
	Phoenix	Bungie	Microsoft	37
	Resident Evil 4	Capcom	Capcom	7
	Roll Call	TBA	Sci	35
	Quake IV	Raven Soft.	Activision	N/A
	Serious Sam 2	Croteam	Take-Two	21
	Starship Troopers	Empire	Empire	27
	Starsky & Hutch 2	Empire	Empire	N/A
	Star Wars: Battlefront 2	Pandemic	LucasArts	36
	State of Emergency 2	VIS	BAM!	N/A
	Street Racing Syndicate	Eutechnyx	Namco	N/A
	Stubbs the Zombie Rebel Without a Pulse	Wideload Games	Microsoft	37
	Super Monkey Ball Deluxe	Sega	Sega	34
	Survivor	Replay Studios	TBA	36
	Syberia 2	Micros	TBA	N/A
	The Fast and the Furious	Genki	Vivendi Univ.	N/A
	The Last Job	TBA	TBA	N/A
	The Red Star	Chris. Gossetti	TBA	32
	True Crime 2	Luxoflux	Activision	N/A
	War Devil	Sammy	TBA	N/A
	X2: The Return	Egosoft	Deep Silver	37

XBOX CLASSICS

The latest and best of the value range



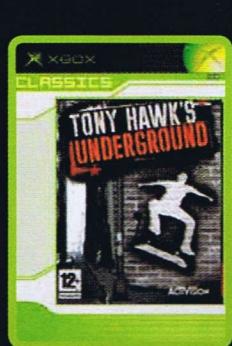
The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King
Issue 22
Score 9.1



Project Gotham Racing 2
Issue 23
Score 9.3



Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic
Issue 20
Score 9.5



Tony Hawk's Underground
Issue 22
Score 8.8

Inbox



Letters 36 Editor

KEVIN CHEUNG
GAME OF CHOICE: KOTOR 2

More jibes at Ben T, more rants about whether of nog *Halo 2* lived up to the hype, a few unintelligible outbursts – it's the bulging sack of goodness that is the *OXM* Letters page!

DOPPELÄNGER

Is it me or does Ben T look like the guy on the front of the *Fable* box?

Cozi, via email

Now you come to mention it, our resident Balvarine does bear a passing resemblance to the *Fable* guy. It's all falling into place now... just last week we caught him tugging on a jerkin and muttering something about choking his chicken.

THE FORCE IS STRONG...

I have modded my Xbox by putting it inside a 1997 *Star Wars* Millennium Falcon toy. It is a massive modification involving lots of cutting, soldering and filing etc, but it was well worth it. I hope you like it!

Steve Perry, email

Okay, Steve, you are perhaps the nerdiest, most crazed owner of an Xbox we've ever come across, but wow, what an owner. We are not even going to begin to think how you managed to get an entire Xbox's guts inside the Millennium Falcon, but here's a massive round of applause for doing it anyway. We reckon this could start a brand new trend: *Star Wars* toys that double as consoles. If anyone else out there has an Xbox they think beats this stellar effort, then feel free to email us at the usual address. We've a funny feeling we're not actually going to find one though. Well done, Steve!



▼ *Fable*: Ben T is the star, and boy, doesn't he know it!

WRITE TO US at OAXM, PO Box 1037 Bondi Junction NSW 1355

WWW POST ON THE FORUM
You can find it at www.derwenthoward.com.au

EMAIL US WITH your rants, hopes and opinions at staff@oxm.com.au

YOUR OPINIONS COUNT! Your input here has a direct effect on the content of your *Official Xbox Magazine*, so let us know which games you like or don't like, what you want to see more of or less of in the mag, or just rant by text, mail, forum or email!



↑ Just how cool is this on a scale of one to ten? Eleven, that's how cool. Can you build us one, Steve?

PLAYING OFFLINE?

Over 15 million Xboxes sold worldwide. Under two million Live subscriptions. Microsoft's aim is to increase the uptake of Live through offering more and better Live functionality in new games – a brilliant sales and marketing strategy. There is no doubt that Live increases the number of game hours played, increasing the value-for-money of a game, but this marketing and sales push seems to be at the expense of single player functionality and longevity for those without Live.

Take *Halo 2* for instance; undoubtedly a superb game, with fantastic enemy AI and easily the best game on Xbox. Five million units of *Halo 2* sold support this. The one million unique Gamertags playing *Halo 2* also suggest an optimum Live experience. The question begging to be asked is

what are the other 80 per cent of *Halo 2* owners doing after they finish *Halo 2*'s single player campaign? They aren't playing 'Slayer' with bots that's for sure!

Microsoft needs Live to work, but they can't afford to forget or alienate the other 80 per cent of Xbox owners, who can't access broadband. The addition of more single player unlockables and bots would go some way to increasing value-for-money for the majority of Xbox owners.

BR, via email

You've hit the head on all the right nails. Usually, game development centres on catering to its audience. Simultaneously pushing a marketing agenda is a difficult balancing act, but it should never be at the expense of the experience.

STAR LETTER

→ Send snail mail to Official Australian Xbox Magazine, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355; or email us at: staff@oxm.com.au. Thanks to Microsoft, the writer of the Star Letter gets a copy of *Halo 2*!



ONE HALO TO RULE THEM ALL

First of all, let's get one thing straight: I love *Halo 2*. But I have a problem with Live. Everyone's going on about the plus side of *Halo 2*. What about the drawbacks? Everyone is playing it on Live, but where does that leave the likes of *Crimson Skies*, *PGR*, and *Burnout 3*? Like a great cyclone of death to all other online games, *Halo 2* will suck up gamers and take them away from these gems. By the time they've dared venture from the lobbies of *Halo 2*, more online games will have come out and left old ones in their wake. You might say that it's a good thing that every other game that comes out now is online but that means the lives of other online games will be cut short. Few gamers will return to the oldies unless they're hardcore fans. Remember, *Halo 2* is great but it doesn't have everything.

Liam 'Pigeon of Doom' Dean, via email

Remember those Christmases when you'd get a heap of presents? Most of it was junk from aunts who thought a colouring pencil set from Franklins constituted a 'gift', but there were lots of pressies nonetheless. Now, imagine *Halo 2* is the best present, but it's surrounded by hundreds of other gifts. Of course you're going to open the big toy

and play with it first, but eventually you'll get round to playing with the others because otherwise you know you'd be missing out... oh, who are we trying to kid? *Halo 2* is astounding – why would you want to play anything else? People are snapping up Live Starter Kits just to play it. If anything, it'll mean more people will have access to the Live content of their games that they never had before. Believe us, everyone loves variety – *Halo 2* isn't going to strangle out the other titles.

▼ *Halo 2*: go ahead, burn it! See if we care, you fool!



Shorts



WRITE TO Official Xbox Magazine, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction NSW 1355

The day *Halo 2* came out I woke at 7am, washed and ate breakfast (yes, I wash my breakfast). Left the house and went to school. I arrived home at around 4:30pm, looked at some porn, read some music mags then played some guitar.

'The Jam'

Bring out the Xmaster General. Raise the pitchforks and wave them like some kind of reactionary tabloid newspaper eader! Don't ever darken our hallways (or mailbox) again Jam, shame on you for having what we've often heard referred to as 'a life'. Bah!

hi catrin wot r u up to. How r your hols so far. Pls txt bck markian

anon

Um, fine thanks, honey, but we asked you not to call us at here the office.

I want a game wher u can kit up da cars. *Underground* aint dat gr8, acclaim hav f'd up *Juiced*, wat bout *Auto Modelista*? Dats been hushed up l8ly, wens it coming?

anon



↑ *GTA SA*: coming to Xbox - honestly!

Erm... u mit wanna try lokin 4 *Midnight Club 3* mate. It is gonna b gr8 an all that. Luv a duk, cowabunga in it.

Why did *Fable* only get 9.7 in issue 32 it should have at most a 9.4 simply because of the lack of gender choice!

Greg Campbell

Hey, if you want to dress up like a lady and skip through villages and forests declaring your womanly pride to the beat of a Marcia Hines number, be our guest. we'll happily go to Lionhead and put in the suggestion for you.

is *GTA San Andreas* ever going to be on xbox why is it only on ps2 im very close to buying one and i dont realy want to do that.

Nathan g

Then don't! Yes, *San Andreas* is coming out on Xbox, but no, we've still not got a release date just yet. Don't go buying one of those nasty PlayStation 2s - instead, enjoy the copious amount of Xbox-exclusive games then worry about it nearer the time!

we all luv oxm :) o yeh y don u ave ne hot chix in dese magazines!

anon

No hot chicks? Have you not laid eyes on the fair and lustful Vanessa recently? We may constantly abuse her with various taunts and insults, but that's only our way of showing a deep affection for her. She might be a right old pagan at times, but you should see her when she's all dolled up in her chains and goth gear! She's like a walking siren of dark lust. You cannot resist!

STILL NOT HAPPY?

I've just been strolling through a fair few online forums of late, and I have happened to notice all the rantings and ravings about how *Halo 2* hasn't satisfied people. Everywhere I look and everywhere I read, all I ever hear about is how someone, somewhere, is pissed off about *Halo 2* not being "perfect" enough, or not living up to the hype. I think these people should get a life and appreciate *Halo 2* for what it is, think of the good qualities of a game before the you think of the bad ones. I love *Halo 2*, and sure, there a few things wrong with it, but I say who cares - just enjoy it and stop being so negative.

DaRKjeD_19, from the forums

There are perpetual nitpickers who'll tell you there's no such thing as a perfect game and there are people like us who'll recognise a game for being the best of its class. Personally I'd rather enjoy my games and relish the experiences they provide. After all, wouldn't the alternative of finding and magnifying every last thing you hate about the games you buy be a grand waste of time and money? People who do that should frankly stop playing games.



EVERYBODY LOVES YOU!

I felt that I needed to share with you my view of the recently released *Fable*. I have been very excited and desperate to get this game for a long time. So, when it was finally released last week, my wife went and got it for me whilst she was out and about. On her return, I started to play. I immediately fell in love with the look and feel of the game.

My only complaint is that I finished it in just over 11 hours spread over a few days. I was really looking forward to just wandering about, buying a house, maybe even getting married. The problem I had is that Guildmaster keeps going on about a new quest card. It gets really annoying after a while so you just get on with the quests. I had hoped that once you finish the game you could then go back and do all the other sub quests and puzzles. Unfortunately it just ends. The other thing is the end boss was a bit wimpy.

Tony, via email

Ah, the old 'press Y to skip scene' problem. All you have to do to continue once Jack is dead is sit through ten minutes of developer credits. Patience has its rewards!

SUFFERING SEQUELS

As you know, there are a shower of sequels coming over the next year. That's great, but what will happen in 50 years' time? In approximately ten years, we've experienced ten *Final Fantasies*, seven *Metal Gears* and six *Tony Hawks*. Gaming has only been around for 30 years, but now it's reaching new heights thanks to storylines and the invasion of the sequels. In a few more decades we'll be playing *Metal Gear Solid: Sons of Daughters of Mothers of Friends of Cousins of Dogs of Fathers of Liberty*. Developers: please get a bit more original or one day we might be playing *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 25*: With yet another slight gameplay twist that sounds really interesting at first, but after an hour you'll realise it's the same game...

Anon

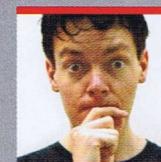
Hey, I'd love to play *Halo 6* if it comes around. But if you don't like sequels, don't buy 'em.

The OXM team

What we've been up to this month



KEVIN CHEUNG // EDITOR



JAMES COTTEE // SUB-EDITOR

KEVIN's been moaning about how boring everything seems to be after playing *Halo 2* inside out. All except *KOTOR 2*, though.

NOW PLAYING: *Halo 2*, *KOTOR 2*, *Burnout 3*
NY RESOLUTION: Clean the desk a little more often.



MATT WOLFS // TECH EDITOR

MATT'S PRECIOUS Bills are licking their wounds after a crap season in the NFL, but it's all good - Kev's 49ers are bottom of the league.

NOW PLAYING: *CVS Chaos*, *KOF 2001*
NY RESOLUTION: Argue less on forums



DAN TOOSE // WRITER

STILL NO love for Dan, at least when it comes to replacing his broken control pad. It seems his benefactors are either blind or miserly. We suspect it's both.

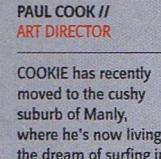
NOW PLAYING: *Pro Evolution Soccer 4*
NY RESOLUTION: Get an S Controller



RALPH PANEBIANCO // WRITER

FOR Xmas, Ralphie thanked all that was holy that he wasn't in the USA, for one cannot drink in the USA if one is under 21.

NOW PLAYING: *Third Age*, *Worms*, *Halo 2*
NY RESOLUTION: Stop challenging kids to deathmatches



BEN TALBOT // PRODUCER

OVERWORKED and stressed, Ben forgot who he was at a press event and was found wandering the streets talking to himself.

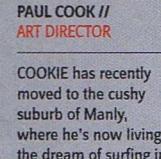
NOW PLAYING: *Halo 2*, *Halo 2*, *Halo 2*...
NY RESOLUTION: Pluck that god-awful monobrow.



ANDY IRVING // STAFF WRITER

ANDY went Christmas shopping at Westfields Bondi Junction, but accidentally blew his entire budget on himself. Good lad.

NOW PLAYING: *Pro Evo 4*, *Halo 2*, *Fable*
NY RESOLUTION: Spend more on other people

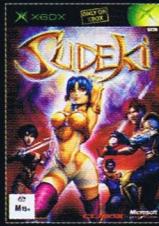


PAUL COOK // ART DIRECTOR

COOKIE has recently moved to the cushy suburb of Manly, where he's now living the dream of surfing in the morning before ferrying to work.

NOW PLAYING: *Pro Evolution Soccer 4*
NY RESOLUTION: Mmm... Surf...

Pray for a full frontal assault.



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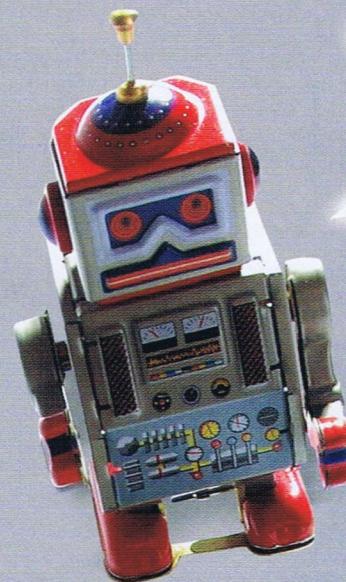
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Do robots dream of electric sequels?

We discover first-hand why big stompy battle armour can be bad for your nerves

Words: Ben Talbot

COULD IT HAVE been yet another idiotically late night playing *Ninja Gaiden*? Could it have been my distant obsession with *Metal Arms*? I guess we'll never really know why I suffered a mini-psychotic breakdown during a recent eight-way showdown in *MechAssault 2*. While we're not quite at the stage where

we're talking about foaming at the mouth, we *are* talking completely flaking out in front of Denny Thorley, president of Day 1 Studios. So much so in fact, that I lost the power of coherent speech mid-interview, just like a teenage virgin trying to chat up the hottest girl in school.

It was a disaster comparable to dropping Peter Molyneux's laptop (yes, I did) but this time I was given a second chance »

Exclusive Access: MechAssault 2 Interview

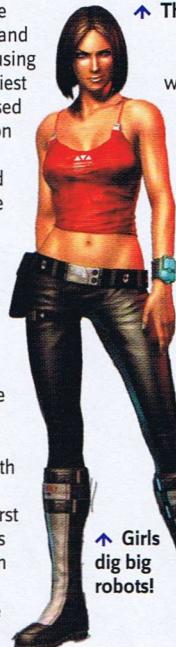


» thanks to the wonders of email! I'd already heard that *MechAssault* has a long heritage, stretching far beyond the original Xbox game (Issue 09, 8.0) and asked Thorley for a brief history lesson.

"*MechAssault* is based on a universe called *BattleTech*," he explains. "It started as a board game and evolved into a role-playing game centred around combat in 100-ton walking weapons of destruction called BattleMechs. Eventually the game got so popular that novels and videogames were being created using the intellectual property. The earliest *BattleTech* computer games focused on all the action from a simulation perspective. In *MechAssault* we focused on action and tactics and were less concerned about all the management aspects of driving the BattleMechs."

"While I can't say we have been absolutely 'true' to the *BattleTech* fiction we are finding the *BattleTech* aficionados are being very successful playing our games. Familiarity with the subtle aspects of the weapons and heat build-up are giving the veteran players noticeable advantages with our game."

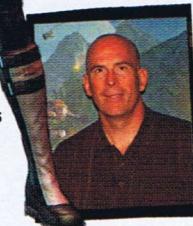
Having played through the first third of Campaign mode, it seems one of the biggest evolutions is an emphasis on likeable central characters. Thorley tells us a little more about the game's heroes.



▲ The targeting system is identical.

"With *MechAssault 2: Lone Wolf* we wanted to let the player experience the world from a human's perspective. This required us to introduce new characters and update some returning characters in the game. This allowed us to tell a better story and give the player a better sense of immersion in the game. Each of the characters has a distinct look and voice that allows us to tell aspects of the story with their personality.

"There are three primary characters driving the game experience. You play as the pilot



▲ Girls dig big robots!



▲ The VTOL resupplies other 'Mechs.

alongside Lieutenant Foster and Major Natalia. Everyone works for the Major and she tells you what you need to do. Foster is your tech and keeps the 'Mechs in good shape," Thorley explains.

MechAssault was the most popular Xbox Live game when it was released two years ago. I ask Thorley what he considers to be the most important thing Day 1 Studios need to do with *MechAssault 2* at the forefront of online gaming. "We do expect *MechAssault 2* to be one of the leading games on Live," he declares resolutely. "We've pushed all aspects of multiplayer - from adding clans to the semi-persistent

"We paid attention to how our fans played, not just what they told us"

Denny Thorley, president, Day 1 Studios

Conquest mode, we are giving the players so many new ways to enjoy Xbox Live.

"To stay on the forefront of online gaming we need to keep the *MechAssault 2* community completely engaged and challenged by the game. To do this we'll be supporting tournaments and downloadable content as well as keeping the game stats up on the website for people to track how they're doing even though they may not be playing on their Xbox at the time."

It suddenly becomes a bit clearer what made me freak out that day. I remembered being brutally annihilated by a *MechAssault* player called BBR Xtreme (see Issue 19). I'm already worried that the expert *MechAssault* players will dominate the sequel with ease. Thorley does his best to reassure me: "There are so many new tactics and strategies with *MechAssault 2* I doubt you'll feel too intimidated. There's the BattleArmor, with its jacking capability, the VTOL aircraft and its support role and, of course, the tank. These are all new to everyone. There are plenty of opportunities for you to feel good about



▲ Everything you see here, you can do!



↑ Hunting in packs is the only way to take out some of the heavy 'Mechs.

your contribution to your team. Our fans are very vocal and we learned a great deal from them. We also paid attention to how they played, not just what they said to us."

The 'jacking' system is undoubtedly the game's most exciting new feature, adding a massive new tactical dimension to online play. Players using the BattleArmor are easily outgunned by the other 'Mechs, but they have a distinct advantage of being able to hack and instantly incapacitate their opponents. It's as simple as jumping on their backs and pressing a sequence of

random buttons quicker than your opponent can. Succeed and their 'Mech is yours for the taking; fail and you'll be vaporised by their high-tech defences.

"We tried several systems before refining the button-pressing matching technique. We tried having the 'Mech crash into buildings and jump up and down to shake the BattleArmor and we also tried several variations of the final mini-game."

Conquest mode has been especially tailored for online play. From what Thorley reveals it sounds very similar to *Star Wars*

Battlefront's Galactic Conquest mode.

"Players declare their allegiance to one of the *BattleTech* fictional houses of the inner sphere. There's House Davion, House Kurita and several more. Each house has a number of planets in its territory, including a 'home' planet that they can never lose. Players attack enemy planets adjacent to their planets or defend their own planets from attack. Each planet has a multiplayer game type and map associated with it.

"If an attacking house successfully defeats the defending house a predetermined number of times in succession, the planet ownership goes to the attacker. Of course, there could be a number of battles raging simultaneously for the ownership of the planet. We'll resolve ownership of the battle on the server side of the game and post the results to Conquest server and the *MechAssault 2* website," Thorley explains.

It sounds like an epic experience, so I ask if there's ever a final conclusion to Conquest mode. For the first time, Thorley sounds noncommittal. "We'll be watching the Conquest server closely and see how

→ The BattleArmor is well animated.

well the players balance the galaxy on their own."

I tell Thorley that if I was going to conquer the universe, I'd do it stealthily so no one would notice. "Sure, stealth is a valuable and viable strategy with several of the vehicles in many of the game types," he agrees. "Fast 'Mechs going 'null-sig' are incredibly valuable in Capture the Flag and Snatch It game types. You can also use a team-mate's 'Mech to carry your BattleArmor into the fight without showing a radar signature to your enemy. This is a great way to set up a hijack opportunity."

Another way to sneak around unnoticed is to drop your armour altogether and run around on foot. Although you can be killed with a single shot, it's possible to sneak up behind a prone enemy and set a devastating proximity bomb.

"You get to use the proximity bomb about ten missions into the single-player campaign and, of course, whenever you want in multiplayer," Thorley reveals. "The bomb will detonate on the pilot's pull of the trigger or by proximity to the enemy. This is incredibly useful for protecting your flag or base in multiplayer games."

If only I'd known all this before my 'episode' it might never have happened. Thanks to Denny Thorley for all of this hot new info and putting me back on the course to true *MechAssault* mastery.



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Expectations are riding high for the sequel to one of Xbox Live's most popular games.

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 4: Lockdown

Words: Stephen Farrelly

Dev: Ubisoft	Pub: Ubisoft
Players: 1 - TBA	Live Compatible
Multiplayer: TBA	Release: Q2 '05
www.ubi.com	

RAINBOW SIX 3 *Black Arrow* accomplished a lot not just for its single player campaign, but also for its multiplayer component, which is the most played Xbox Live game since its release. With *Rainbow Six 4: Lockdown*, Ubisoft has some pretty big shoes to fill. Indeed, the question as to whether the franchise warrants a follow-up has been raised since the announcement of the follow-up. But an intimate briefing at Ubisoft's Montreal studio gave us a chance to drill the team about what improvements we can expect and how they plan to top the already brilliant *Black Arrow*.

"We wanted to bring the squad to the next level," explains Louis Lamarche, producer of the *Rainbow Six 4*. "And with the overhaul of the multiplayer component, we've done just that." That's a big step to take, given the success of *Black Arrow* on Xbox Live, but Louis' background in online

entertainment has ensured players will be blown away by the additions and sheer scope of what will be available.

To begin with, an RPG-like levelling system has been implemented for new characters, all of which are saved online (only one character per Xbox Live account, though). This means players will accumulate skill points which can be used to train and build-up their characters in certain fields, and you can gear these fields so that your character will excel at certain skills and scenarios.

There's a good reason why players can only save one character to Xbox Live (but not your Xbox, mind) - the developers are concerned about competitiveness and balance. "We didn't want people to be able to tamper with their characters on their Xbox," Louis explains. "So we approached Microsoft and with each Xbox Live account you can save up to 64K of information, just enough for a created character. This way no one can cheat and it balances the fun for everyone - you genuinely have to invest time to level-up your character and earn skills." And in a cheeky but creative stroke, they've called this the Career Mode.

This idea may seem a little odd to hardened *Rainbow Six* veterans, but



» **↑ Hmm... a little tzujing by the Fab Five wouldn't hurt...**



↑ These close-range fire fights can get pretty hairy.



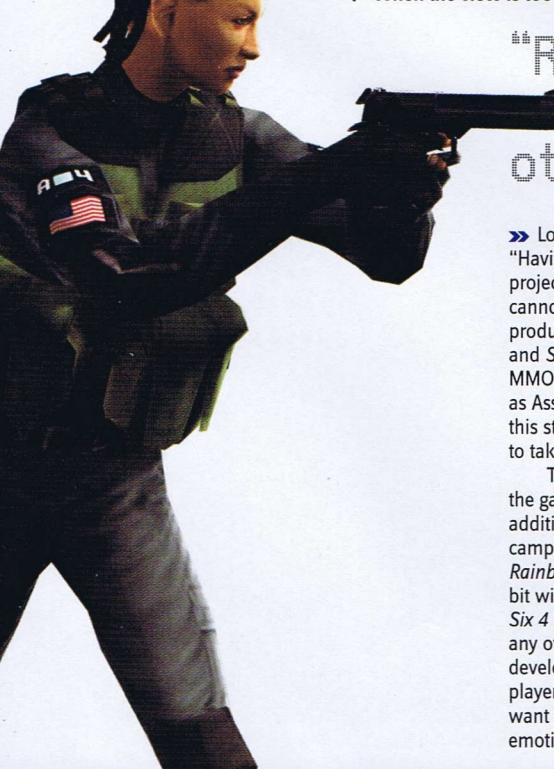
↑ Well, there goes the element of surprise.



↑ Study the mission objectives, then move out.



↑ It's a good thing you've got those safety goggles on.



"Rainbow Six 4: Lockdown is more story-driven than any other iteration in the series"

» Louis assures us the system is sound. "Having worked on so many online projects, I think I know what can and cannot work with online multiplayer." The producer has worked on *The Matrix Online* and *Shadow Bane*, two high profile MMORPGs from Ubisoft, as well as serving as Associate Producer on *Black Arrow*, so at this stage in time, we're going to have to take his word for it.

The multiplayer isn't the only aspect of the game to receive an upgrade, as the additions being made to the single player campaign should have most hardcore *Rainbow Six* enthusiasts chomping at the bit with anticipation. For starters, *Rainbow Six 4 Lockdown* is more story-driven than any other iteration in the series. The developer has worked hard to ensure players feel for their team and genuinely want to get the most out of their skills and emotions. To this end, the game is being

livened up by a massive overhaul to the graphics engine. Havok physics add a brilliant sense of realism and dynamics to the specular lighting system, which is made even prettier by the deep particle system. Environments have been pushed so far as to include more open areas like courtyards and gardens, which goes a long way to ensure that players no longer feel the familiarity of corridor play. Specular lighting plays a massive role in these areas, suspending disbelief as players move from shadowy hallways to UV-laden feature gardens, keeping them locked into the game through the natural sensation of geometry and space.

It's hoped that *Rainbow Six 4 Lockdown* will come across as more of an interactive novel, using its narrative elements and special effects to attract an entirely new audience to the series. This isn't to say Ubisoft has forgotten the game's



↑ A queue for the Gents'. Now that's rare.

core audience - veterans of the series can expect every game mode from *Black Arrow* to be carried across as well as a slew of new modes.

The interface has changed to accommodate the potential for mass-market appeal though, with two skill modes being available from the front-end. Normal mode is designed for players who are new to the franchise and features a very easy pick-up-and-play direction - there's very little that will confuse anybody fresh to *Rainbow Six*.

Catering to the fans is the Career mode, featuring the usual customisable labyrinth of features, modes, abilities, weapons

»

Exclusive Access: Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 4: Lockdown



↑ Send your team mates in first if you're unsure.



↑ "Open up, or we'll blow your house down! Er, up!"



» and so on that will leave veterans feeling right at home. For the hardcore, the AI has been marginally improved with a smart system based on situational behaviour, so AI won't always act or react the same or repeat the same patterns; and their actions will be based on the situation at hand, making their behaviour more unpredictable and dangerous. Most importantly, the one-shot one-kill mechanic remains, keeping the challenge at a high level to differentiate between the men and the boys.

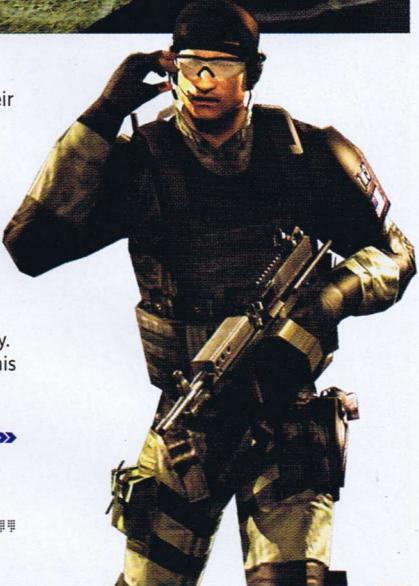
Even still, the game is designed to help newcomers at most of the complex turns. Instead of having to think of every tactical

aspect of a mission, a context sensitive menu has been made available in-game that suggests a possible course of action and, in turn, helps you out of those sticky situations. That means, for instance, there should never be a situation in which you approach a door and have no idea what to do. In *Rainbow Six 4 Lockdown*, a menu will always give you the right amount of choices based on your current objective and the whereabouts of any enemy troops.

Friendly AI has also been revamped. The good news for both hardcore and casual players is that your team-mates are more than capable of holding their own,

which means you'll never need to hold their hand through a mission. There are even sniper missions where you're set at one position picking off baddies while the *Rainbow Six* team members attempt to complete their own set of objectives. This isn't a glorified babysitting exercise, though. During such a mission, you'll be able to see your team mates thinking for themselves, reacting to any enemies you missed and taking care of them accordingly.

Most of the original cast is intact for this outing. There are three new female characters and each mission sees you controlling three operatives in the field



“Their actions will be based on the situation at hand, making their behaviour more unpredictable”



↑ As with previous *Rainbow Six* games, cover and positioning are crucial to winning a firefight. Without them, you'll be cut down like this idiot here catching the crossfire.



↑ Use the bullet trails to hunt down those pesky snipers.



↑ "Sir, we've found the third Halo"



↑ That's a hell of a gauntlet to run through



↑ "Look Ma, no glare!"

"The threat angle has been considerably pumped up to provide a more intense experience through the cultivation of fear, expectation and success"



↑ Bloody vandals have struck again...

with a slightly modified field look and feel. The theme for the game, according to Ubisoft, is "Rainbow Six under attack and constant threat". This is a theme that's based on the current world political climate and a fairly obvious direction for the game to travel towards given its roots. To that end, the threat angle has been considerably pumped up to provide players with a more intense experience through the cultivation of fear, expectation and success; you'll want to live, but equally want to achieve every mission objective to maintain a sense of freedom for all.

So far so good. The introduction of simplified features for newcomers is a welcome addition that will help anyone unfamiliar with the franchise to waltz on in without feeling like they're in over their heads. Hopefully, this won't be at the expense of the difficulty and degrees of customisation that existing fans have come to expect of the series. The new features for Xbox Live will ensure even more success for the franchise as the online console multiplayer game of choice. Look out for more news about *Rainbow Six 4: Lockdown* in our upcoming issues.



↑ Now that is one kick-arse looking piece of high-tech weaponry.



↑ Whoops! Looks like you've just walked into an ambush.



A deathmatch made in Heaven: exclusive interview and hands-on with Epic's monster shooter

Unreal Championship 2: The Liandri Conflict

Words: Gavin Ogden

Dev: Epic Games	Pub: Midway
Players: 1-4 Split	Live: 2-8 players
Players: 2-8 S.Link	Release: Feb 2005
www.unrealchampionship2.com	

IT'S BEEN ALMOST two years since the mighty *Unreal Championship* (Issue 10, 9.2) helped kick-started the launch of Xbox Live last year. It was the first (of many) online-focused first-person shooters for Xbox that brought with it a hardcore following carried over from its PC heritage. Two years later and the follow-up, *Unreal Championship 2: The Liandri Conflict*, is doing things you thought a shooter should never do. Erase any preconceptions you may have that this is a port of a previously released *Unreal Tournament* PC game.

Epic Games has brought the shooter back in-house (Digital Extremes coded the original) and as a result, the team has made a few bold and very surprising changes to the famous formula that makes its brand of deathmatch a force to be reckoned with. A lot more time, money and effort has been plunged into the development of *UC2* and

from what we saw and played at a recent press event in the States, it's already starting to pay off.

Microsoft was originally due to publish *UC2*, but last month we brought you news that Midway had secured a deal to publish three *Unreal* multiplayer games including *UC2* on Xbox. This was a surprise to everyone, as Midway is famously known for pumping out over-the-top arcade games and not PC shooters with a massive following. "The move away from Microsoft was really its idea as the company was starting to focus on its own intellectual properties," Epic president Michael Capps tells us during an exclusive interview.

"The guys gave *Unreal Championship 2* a lot of love and support, but at the same time we were never going to be another *Halo* for the company and Midway just embraced it. Midway now gets a foot in the door in the PC market with the credibility that comes with *Unreal*, as well as getting a game that's almost done. Midway has done a lot in the last 12 months and *Unreal* fits in really well with its edgier titles in development like *NARC* and *Area 51*. It did hurt to split up with Atari, too - a lot of those guys have worked on *Unreal* longer than some people at Epic have."

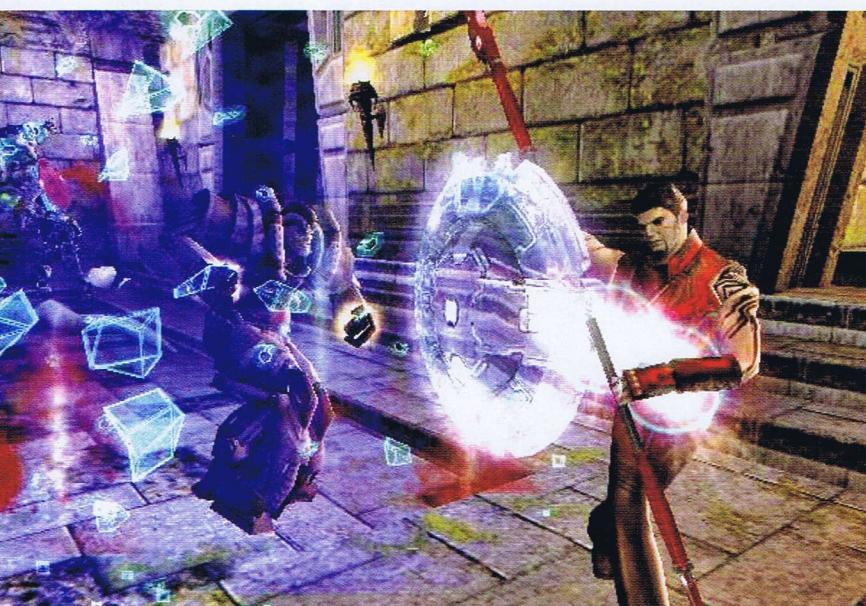
»



↑ The action is relentless in both first- and third-person perspectives.



↑ Looks like a scene out of *Star Wars* but it isn't. Use your sword to kill and kill again.



↑ Blocking your opponent's attacks will play a major part in your survival.



"There's 120,000 polygons on screen at any one moment - it's a totally new engine"

» *UC2* is being touted as a true second-generation Xbox title, but what does that mean for us gamers? What can we expect to see from *UC2* that we didn't in the original? "Well *UC* was a kind of port of *UT2003* on the PC and it really wasn't

optimised for the Xbox. At the time, the Digital Extremes team was working really hard with the Microsoft guys to get the game up and running on Xbox Live in time for the Live launch. All the *Unreal* games have a common thread, and it's totally possible that you'll see a few maps and character classes from *UC2* in the next *UT* game," explains Capps.

"This time round we've been able to spend a lot of time working with the Xbox hardware," he continues, "and from a

Mortal Kombat Kameo

There's a little surprise in store for fans of MK

WHAT'S THIS? *Mortal Kombat* characters making an appearance in an *Unreal* Championship game? "A character or characters from the *MK* universe might make their way into our game," reveals Capps. "We had a character that we just hated and wanted to get rid of - and then Midway came along and we wondered if it'd let us do something different. Everyone to a certain extent knows *Mortal Kombat*." Specifics have yet to be revealed, but we're expecting some of *MK*'s biggest stars to make the jump.

MORTAL KOMBAT DECEPTION

↓ MK fighters will feature in *UC2*



↓ Could Sub Zero make an appearance?



game up and running too, which we're really impressed with," explains Capps. "Keeping up with all those Live menus is a lot of work, though. *UC* was originally designed to be played using a modem on PC, but *UC2* handles bandwidth, latency and network issues much better thanks to the new engine. As long as you have a good ping, the game plays online really, really well. Limiting it to eight players does have the benefit of games not getting too crowded to the point where lag becomes an issue as well."

Digital Extremes developed *UC* and *UT2003* but the franchise has been brought back inside Epic Games for *UC2*, which has its bonuses. "The DE guys did a great job with the games they worked on, but they're never going to love the franchise like we do - this is our bread and butter and *Unreal* is the game that we built the company on. Bringing it back in-house has meant a lot to us. We also have another franchise in development that's separate to *Unreal* - we're just starting that one up but we can't say anything about it just yet. Bringing *Unreal* back in-house means we can concentrate 100 per cent on it."

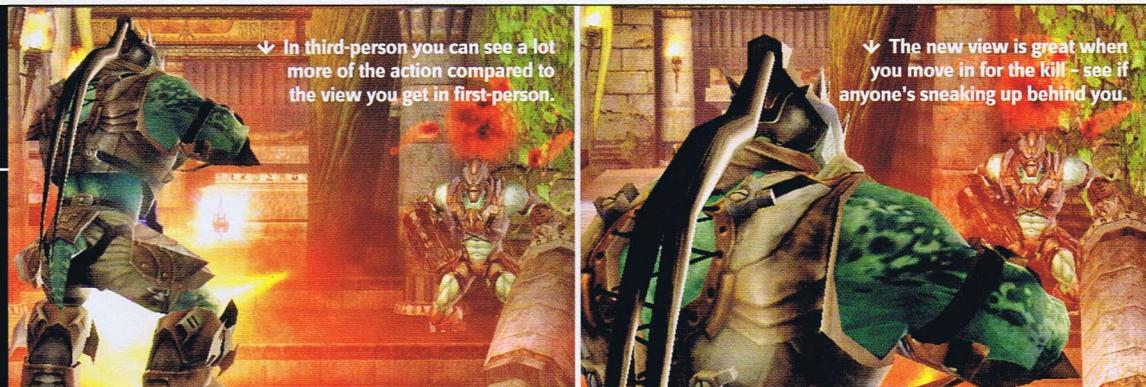
By far the biggest addition to the *Unreal* - and even deathmatch - formula >>



OVER THE SHOULDER

New-look camera brings action closer to home

A BIG NEW feature is a third-person viewpoint. In the options menu you can set the game up so that your favourite viewpoint is automatically selected to your choice of weapons. If you like the devastating rocket launcher in first-person but the shock rifle in third, so be it. The choice is all yours.



» is the inclusion of a third-person mode and melee weapons. When we first heard this we weren't too sure what to expect. Our first game of *UC2* was played out totally in first-person, but it quickly became clear that we needed to get into the whole third-person mode/melee weapon thing. And do you know what? It worked like a charm.

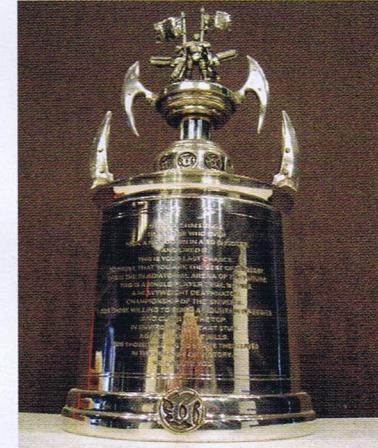
Two players can be running and gunning at each other and when they get within reach, the guns are dropped, out come the melee weapons (swords and staff) and both characters proceed to beat the crap out of one another using simple combos and special lock-on moves. To be in

with a chance of winning you really need to know your combos, that much was clear after we were sliced and diced on more than one occasion.

"When I first heard the idea of including a third-person mode I wasn't too sure either. However, it's not an ultra-complicated fighting mechanic, so you won't be having something like three different fighting styles like you do in *Mortal Kombat*," says Capps. "You've got a couple of core attacks, a few jump and block moves. It's about as deep as one of the ranged weapons. We've got a lot of hardcore *UT* players in our office obviously, and with

UC2 I've seen about a 50/50 split between first- and third-person fighting. For melee you have to go third-person. It's vital when you're doing wall-climb jumps to be in third because it's almost impossible in first-person. But you can switch back and forth all the time using the Black button. I prefer the rocket launcher in first-person, but if you want to customise your profile you can pull out certain weapons in either first- or third-person."

Certain character classes have special abilities. These include being able to hover in the air for a limited time, jumping huge distances or moving really fast. Each



↑ Keep your eyes on the prize...

"The Ripjack's a great weapon - charge it up and let the circular saw fly off and sever heads!"



↑ Expect several kinds of multiplayer deathmatch games to be in the final version as well as a few surprises. It's coming together like a dream.

LIVE PLANS BLOWN WIDE OPEN

NOT ONLY IS Epic busy at work finishing the game, it's also preparing downloadable content that Capps says will be available around the launch time next February. "We've already got the first batch of downloadable content planned and we're hoping to have it ready to be released soon after the game launches," he says. Options have been included to tweak gameplay after launch if the studio needs to. "So if a gun is just too powerful in multiplayer we can send out updates to the configuration file. I'm hoping that it'll be 100 per cent perfect when we ship it, but we're setting it so that if it's not, which unfortunately we had with *UC*, we can fix it real quick."



↑ *UC2* will be a monster over Live!

↑ Each character has unique abilities that are there to help you win the championship.

"This is a seriously deep deathmatch experience to mark what could be the last Unreal game on this generation of Xbox"



↑ Don't be sucked in by those looks...

» class also has a selection of abilities that are triggered when your adrenaline meter is maxed out.

"I really like going Nimble which is one of the standard combos that give you quad jump and low grav, and I love to pull that out with the sniper rifle to get to higher areas on the map," continues Capps. "The Ripjack is a great weapon too - I love to charge it up and let the circular saw fly off and sever heads. We have 18 weapons in total, and a lot of them are really visceral. The environments are just sick too, which I had nothing to do with by the way."

Add these features to first- and third-person modes as well as melee weapons, and you have a seriously deep deathmatch experience to mark what could be the last *Unreal* game on this generation of Xbox.

"Currently we don't have any plans to do a further Xbox game on this Xbox. 'Unreal Warfare' is a code name for another game we're working on that's not based in the *Unreal* universe. If you've seen the shots from the *Unreal Engine 3*, that's the direction we're going." Don't worry though, we'll be seeing the *Unreal* series continue on the next system.



↑ We got to sit down and play *UC2* as much as we wanted to at Midway's Gamers Day.



↑ You'll really need to know your hand-to-hand combat to be in with a chance.



As an Australian Surfing Champion

I am Stoked on Australia and its people,

whose laid-back attitude you've,
got to love

whose priceless characters I respect,

and whose Oceans I'll always come home to

An Affirmation for Australia Day by

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citizenship.gov.au australiaday.gov.au

"As an Australian citizen, I affirm my loyalty to Australia and its people, whose democratic beliefs I share, whose rights and liberties I respect, and whose laws I uphold and obey". This is a statement for every Australian, an affirmation of the values we share. On Australia Day, January 26, think about what these words mean to you.

Reviews

Written by gamers who live and love games



Kevin Says...

There's an unwritten rule in the video games industry that says successful franchises are built on blockbusters. We saw a bona fide example of this phenomenon with the release of *Halo 2* in November and, without giving too much away to the stragglers who've yet to play it, there's no question that *Halo 3* is now the title sitting at the back of everyone's minds. In a month's time, Xbox owners will have another high-profile sequel unleashed upon them in the form of *KOTOR 2*, which is every bit as enjoyable as the first. And then after that, there's *Splinter Cell 3*. I guess some of us will have a great excuse to use the best natural protection from the sun this Summer: staying indoors.

Our Badges explained



XBOX ELITE

Any game scoring a whopping 8.5 or more.



GAME OF THE MONTH

Our favourite of the Elite games reviewed this month.



XBOX LIVE

Downloadable content, online play, or both.



ONLY ON XBOX

An Xbox-exclusive game for at least three months.



ON THE DISC

A playable trial or movie of the game is on our disc.

Score Key

8.5-10.0

THE XBOX ELITE - ONE OF THE VERY BEST AVAILABLE

7.5-8.4

A TOP-QUALITY RELEASE THAT'S WELL WORTH HAVING

6.5-7.4

STILL WELL WORTH CONSIDERING, BUT HAS SOME FLAWS

5.0-6.4

AN AVERAGE TITLE WITH NOTHING OUTSTANDING TO OFFER

2.5-4.9

A BAD GAME, AND ONE YOU SHOULDN'T BOTHER WITH

0.0-2.4

CALLING SUCH A RANCID STINKER A 'GAME' IS LIBELOUS

Star Wars KOTOR II: Sith Lords P062

Different developer, same stunning space-based RPG action

Blinx 2: Masters of Time & Space P068

Blink and you'll miss the frenetic feline, now in glorious 50

Call of Duty: Finest Hour P072

Activision's answer to *Medal of Honor* is finally released.

Crash'n'Burn P074

Can this metal-munching arcade racer keep up with *Burnout 3*?

Robotech Invasion P076

The classic Japanese cartoon becomes robo-blasting FPS!

Atari Anthology P077

Get all misty-eyed then thank God games have progressed

Scaler P077

A surprisingly fun metamorphosing masterclass in platforming

Blowout P078

Will you wish this shooter had blown us out and never shown up?

Yu-Gi-Oh! Dawn of Destiny P078

It soon dawned on us this puzzler is strictly for fans of the cartoon

King Arthur P079

They missed out on the movie, but they've made it for the DVD.

Tron 2.0: Killer App P080

It's 1982 all over again with this shooter that's great fun on Live

Fight Club P081

The game of the film of the book. And we are going to talk about it

Guilty Gear X2 Reload P082

High-res 2D fighting. Glorious. Simply glorious.

Backyard Wrestling 2 P084

When you're starting from the bottom, the only way is up.





Don't stress!
This review is a
spoiler-free zone.

Words: Ben Lawrence

Dev: Obsidian	Pub: LucasArts
Players 1	Live: None
Release: Feb 2005	
X www.kotor2.com	

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away...

STAR WARS KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC™ ONLY ON XBOX

THE SITH LORDS



MASTER POWERS. TRAIN ENOUGH IN KOTOR II AND YOU'LL BE REWARDED THE ULTIMATE LEVEL OF POWER - MASTER FORCE. THIS MEANS YOUR SABER GLOWS WITH FLAMES AS YOU STRIKE PEOPLE.

YOUR EYES FLICK open and you're floating in an automated treatment tank. To your left and right, other treatment tanks, inside of which bob the swollen corpses of those you do not know. On the medical bay floor lay scattered droid parts, medical equipment laid to waste, and the bodies of dozens of Republic soldiers. You have no clothing, no companions, no weaponry, and the ship you are on is tumbling through the blackness of space, crippled and belching out power cells. You are the last known Jedi Knight, and this is, by all accounts, your last hour alive. Expect no mysterious realisation of your Force powers as in *KOTOR* (Issue 20, 9.5), there will be no Jedi training at the peaceful Dantoonie academy, and there most certainly is not a merry band of outer space misfits eager to join you on your romp through the stars. You are alone and frightened for the vast majority of the

beginning of *KOTOR II*, and that is exactly how it wants you. For a sequel to such a classic title, it was almost expected that the follow-up would 'do' an *Empire Strikes Back*. Well, it not so much 'does' an *Empire Strikes Back*, as 'out does' it. If you want dark side fury and hopelessness for all that is good in the galaxy, *KOTOR II*'s got it in spades.

Beginning the game as you do (in a pair of pants with the entire Sith on your back), the natural instinct is to equip yourself with a lightsaber as soon as possible, but this, as with so much else in *KOTOR II*, is something you must pay for in blood and sweat. Nothing is given in *The Sith Lords*, and this includes your not-so-merry band. For the first few hours of play (four or five without subquests, touching double figures with), there is nothing to do but run. The hunt is on and you'll find yourself making desperate, frantic dashes across many worlds to escape the Sith's clutches. Initially there is



↑ Frag grenades still come in handy for Jedi.

no choice of destination (unlike the original), for the first hours are desperate times that see you lunging from one stay of execution to the next while you try and piece together what the hell is happening. You will be worn, beaten and humiliated by the time »

Bonus info



BIG EARS

New species to join *KOTOR* are the Sullust, the same species as Nein Nunb from *Return Of The Jedi*. The Sullust are normally pretty trustworthy but still be on your guard - nothing is ever as it seems.

DARTH SPANNER

Throughout certain missions you'll now need to use transport to get around. Like the submarine of the first *KOTOR*, there are speeder bikes and air-cars you will need to mend in order to progress.

OBI-WAN

During the character select screen, keep an eye out for the Jedi head that looks remarkably like Obi-Wan, beard an' all.

Combat mode engaged.



↑ Expect darker worlds, more desperate struggles to maintain your path towards the light (but not dark), and plenty of lightsaber battles too.

ATTACKS OF THE CLONES How your team fights depends on you...

UNLIKE *KOTOR*, when you enter into combat you can assign different attack patterns to your team. Which one you choose could save your life.



AGGRESSIVE If necessary, your team will pursue the foe they are fighting until they have destroyed it. During this attack, they will not switch weapons automatically.



RANGED When fighting ranged style, your team will spread out within 10m of you. They will use ranged weapons as a first choice, but will switch to melee weapons if needed.



STATIONARY Need to guard a target? Select this style of fighting. Your team will stand their ground and attack when approached with either melee or ranged weapons.



JEDI SUPPORT If you have a character capable of Force manipulation they will use it first before resorting to weapons. All other characters will use Aggressive fighting.

SPACEBALLS Our top six characters from your team, and what they can do for you



KREIA

The first member of your team to join you. An old, wise Jedi, she offers you advice and training throughout the game. A superb swordswoman despite only having one hand, she's invaluable during melee combat.



ATTON RAND

A scoundrel and new pilot of the Ebon Hawk, he is the second to join your party. Whispers and rumour follow his every movement. Word has it he played a secretive part in the recent Jedi Civil war.



BAO-DUR

A Zabrak technical specialist. Followed by a home-made remote droid, he helps you create your first lightsaber. A dark, troubled past has seen him forever wandering the galaxy looking for peace. Has an upgradeable cyber arm!



HANDMAIDEN

Handmaiden stows away on board the Ebon Hawk after hearing of your Force powers. She is fiercely protective of you and will follow you to the ends of the galaxy. Superb hand-to-hand combat specialist.



VISAS MARR

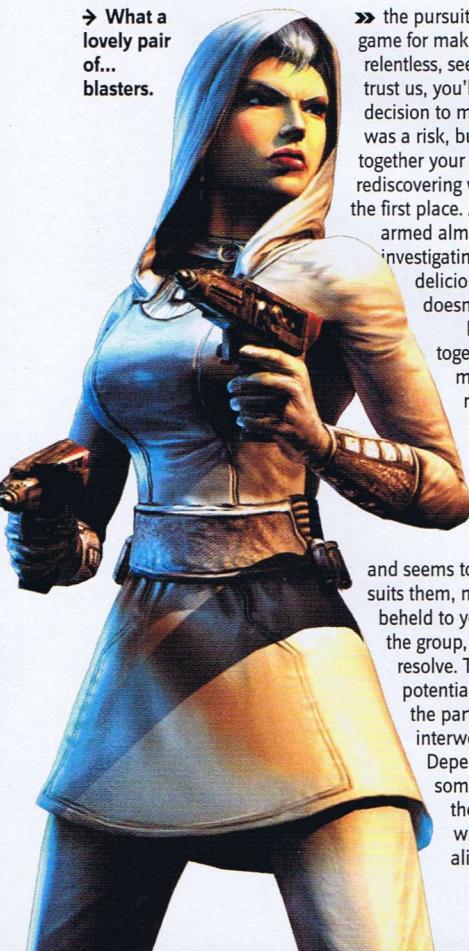
A blind Jedi Sentinel with a past. She is steeped in mystery and has the ability to 'see' using the Force. Perhaps the most secretive of your new team, she is still fiercely loyal to you, regardless of the path you decide to tread.



T3-M4

The original expert droid from *KOTOR*. Is superb at creating computer spikes and unlocking security doors to reveal all those hidden bonuses, although this time around his memory circuits seem a little corrupted...

→ What a lovely pair of... blasters.



» the pursuit eases a little. You'll resent the game for making you suffer hours of relentless, seemingly hopeless fleeing, but trust us, you'll appreciate it. Obsidian's decision to make you defenceless for so long was a risk, but the moment you cobble together your first makeshift 'saber it's like rediscovering what made *KOTOR* so great in the first place. And from then on in, you're armed almost well enough to start investigating this most devious and delicious of stories. "I am your father" doesn't even come close.

By the time you finally knock together your lightsaber you'll have met and worked with several new companions from across the galaxy. Unlike the cock-sure Mission and Wookiee pal Zalbaar, or cantankerous but loveable gramp Jolee Bindo, this new bunch are far from affable. Each has an agenda and seems to be helping you only because it suits them, not because they are particularly beholden to you. This causes friction within the group, which, naturally, you're left to resolve. The implementation of potentially volatile 'side taking' within the party is just the first of many new, interwoven elements of *KOTOR II*.

Depending on how long you listen to someone, or how often you heed their advice, their opinion of you will rise or fall, as will their Force alignment. Others in the party



↑ Feeling a little dark side? Buy yourself a Twi'lek dancer and steal all her earnings!

who disagree with your actions (light or dark) will then cease to offer help, so there is potential for your team, the people you'll rely on to save your life, to implode from within. As well as saving the galaxy it seems a Jedi must be trained in the art of family counselling too. The seemingly obvious answer to this is to go around doing the right thing,

but as Kreia, the Obi-Wan of the piece, points out, simply doing the right thing is no longer adequate. Through the new Force Bond you can see, via Kreia's telepathy, the consequences of your actions. You may give a beggar credits, but then to witness him murdered for them makes you question and second guess »



↑ You'll find more than just treasures in the ancient caves of Sith homeworld Korriban. Go armed, and go carefully.

What it lacks in dazzling planets is more than compensated for by the superior story"

Bonus info

DOWN, BOY!

To prove that *KOTOR II* is darker than the first game, you'll come across a bounty hunter who will stop at nothing to bring you to the Sith. His species? A Wookiee! Wookiees shouldn't be bad. Next thing you know the Sith Lords will be run by Ewoks!

SEE THREEPPIO

There are a few sub-missions in *KOTOR II* that require you to take control of other characters. One of these is a dark side version of C3PO who persuades his dark side companion (an evil R2, naturally) to go on a killing spree.

CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

Look out for special new lightsaber crystals in *KOTOR II*. Some are unique and can only be used by you while others fetch high prices with the right buyers.

» everything you're asked to do. There are deep, entangled machinations at work, and every consequence, be it the smallest gesture, directly affects your team's fate. Trying to be good can, from a certain point of view, lead to the dark side.

As the mystery of *KOTOR II* slowly unravels, so does the galaxy. Eventually, the free-roaming planet-hopping of *KOTOR* comes back into play, but don't think for one minute we're going to tell you why. Suffice to say, it's something far graver and more complex than piecing together parts of a star map.

Carth Onasi's homeplanet Telos makes an appearance, as does Jedi academy planet Dantooine. New planet Onderon and its moon Dxun, mining planet Peragus, Sith homeworld Korriban, refugee world Nar Shaddaa and the Mandalorian world of Malachor V all make for good exploration. Each is swollen with adventure, but it would've been nice to have visited at least one familiar planet from the films. The mere appearance of Tatooine in the first game gave it a grounding and familiarity and, while *KOTOR* has always seemed to pride itself on being unique from the movies, the lack of movie locations this time makes the galaxy seem more distant and unwelcoming. The planets lack *KOTOR*'s awe and

splendour, and aren't as visually arresting. These are bleak, uninviting places that all have more than a touch of the dark side about them. Whether it works or not is a matter of conjecture but maybe it's just another bold move to reflect the game's tone.

On each world there is a goal to be met by way of subquests and chatter much like in *KOTOR*, but the dialogue has been streamlined considerably, allowing more time for those panicked, breathless escapes and battles that threaten to overwhelm you at every moment. This also serves to make Darth Sion, Darth Nihilus, shadowy antagonists and 'other' Darths far more of an enigma than Malak ever was. Whereas some indication of Malak's motives and weakness were hinted at, this time there are none. You cannot train in any specific discipline in the hope it'll be the one you think will serve you in the final conflict because you simply don't know the shape of the threat. The best you can hope is to avoid Sith detection and make the best of your gifts. There are a few new ones, but still caution is recommended. Just because a glut of chokes and mind controls have been introduced doesn't mean your task will be any easier.

Force Scream, Force Revitalise, Beast Control and



↑ Adhesive grenades stick foes to the ground!



↑ The Star Wars world just keeps getting better.

WEAPONS, WEAPONS, EVERYWHERE!

Getting the most out of your team

THIS TIME AROUND your team can each have two different weapon alignments for different combat encounters. So, if you're a melee fan in an area where there are loads of enemies from afar, you might want to consider owning some blasters.



↑ You've got a vibroblade, but those mercenaries need a good blasting.



↑ At the press of a button you've now got your blasters at hand. Kill 'em all!



↑ Once their numbers are reduced, switch back to melee combat, wade in and finish it.

Battle Meditation seem to have the greatest impact, but the learned physical attributes really pack a wallop. When you're on your way to becoming a fully fledged Force-user, moves blaze from your body. You'll scream through the air towards an opponent on the other side of the room and strike them down before they've even raised arms. The air will crackle as you unleash volley after volley of hits and, thanks to the vastly improved work benches, just about everything you possess can be modified. New lightsaber crystals add colours and attributes; old weapons can be stripped of their component parts and remade into grenades, mines or upgrades. Chemicals and compounds can be conjured on lab benches to create new medipacs or antidotes, just as you can now imbue your 'saber with its own Force alignment. Whatever you do, it does. If you're focused and wise, its strike will be sure; if you're quick to anger, the hit ratio will fluctuate wildly. Despite the handy, but not necessarily vital

↑ Nowhere is safe in *The Sith Lords*, not even the Ebon Hawk.

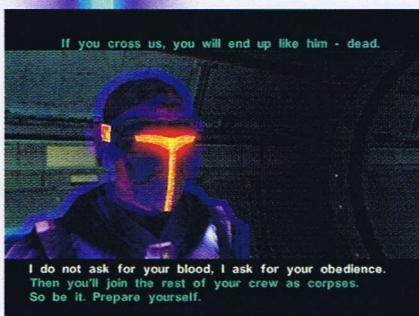
PROTOKILL DROIDS Return Of The Jedi Killer

WITH THE ENTIRE crew of the Ebon Hawk apparently dead, it comes as a bit of a surprise when you open the cargo hold to discover the fizzing AK-47 assassin droid from the first game. The psychotic droid seems to have been irreparably damaged following the mysterious disappearance of the crew.

With newer AK-50 and AK-51 droids being used to hunt you by the Sith, AK-47 might hold a few clues as to why the original crew are missing. If you want to repair him, this becomes one of *KOTOR II*'s ongoing minigames. Every planet you visit has one more component that will mend him. The question is though, will you want to hear what he has to say?



↑ AK-47: reactivate him or let him be?



↑ New equipment makes for great fancy dress.



↓ As before, your character has a colourful past.



↑ Mercenaries are riddled throughout the galaxy hunting you. Sort them out then run for it!

» peripheral differences of Force powers and upgraded attacks, the core of *KOTOR II* is still BioWare's engine and game structure. Obsidian has added new feats but more would've been welcome. The Jedi body models didn't all have to be human, did they? And fully customisable faces should be a prerequisite these days, but aren't included. But what Obsidian *has* done is wise. It's realised that the strength of this fledgling series lies not so much in gadgets and gizmos, but in the plot and its telling. Extras in *KOTOR II* are about adequate, and the return of time-wasters like Pazaak are okay, but it's the story that's the clincher. It doesn't have the spectacle of *KOTOR*, but what it lacks in dazzling planets and invention is more than amply compensated for by the undeniably superior story. This war is fought against unseen enemies with unsure consequences. It is a war of shadow and silence that strikes at you from the darkness, and from that confused awakening in the automated treatment tank to the final wrenching, sucker-punch twist, you'll be totally and utterly mesmerised. An equal to *KOTOR*'s might.

The Summary

STAR WARS KOTOR II: THE SITH LORDS THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- 1 Immensely involving and far darker story easily eclipses *KOTOR*. If you thought that twist was good, you ain't seen nothing yet.
- 2 The influence you have over your team's allegiance to either side is a masterstroke. Be doubly cautious or suffer horrendous consequences.
- 3 A smattering of new powers and weapon upgrades may upset a few hardcore fans. A few more wouldn't have gone amiss.
- 4 The helplessness and powerlessness of your character in the first portion of the game is ingenious. It will upset many, but it's inspired.
- 5 All new planets make for great exploration and, as always, there's plenty to do, but one from a movie next time please, guys!

The Verdict

Incredible. It takes all that was good from *KOTOR*, places it in a far more oppressive place, then throws you in to deal with it.

9.3/10

PREVIOUSLY: First Look - Issue 29, News - Issue 34, Excl. Access - Issue 35
COMING SOON: Hints & cheats

Blinx 2: Masters of Time & Space

ONLY ON
XBOX

Check your watches: Blinx is back and this time he's brought some mates



Words: Graeme Boyd

Dev: Artoon	Pub: Microsoft
Players: 1; 2-4 Split	Live: None
Release: Dec 2004	
www.xbox.com/en-us/blinx2/default.htm	

CATS ARE FAR too clever. One day they will take over the world and reduce us humans to litter tray-shovelling, hairball-extracting slaves. Look at the evidence: cats go round to that mental old lady's house and act all cute and fluffy so they can get a saucer of milk. They identify the person in the neighbourhood who takes the most pride in their garden and then crimp off big jobbies all over it. They can fall off tall buildings and land on their feet. And they control time.

Or at least Blinx does. He's a cat and a Time Sweeper, a janitor of tick-tock who goes around sucking up wasted time with a vacuum. He's also a bit nifty at manipulating the clock by collecting Time Crystals and using them to Fast-Forward, Slow-Mo, Record, Rewind or Pause the progress of time - which should allow for some killer teabreaks.

You may remember Blinx's first outing a couple of years ago (Issue 08, 9.2), which was an outstanding effort at giving Xbox both a solid platform game and a lovable mascot. Well, time's moved on and Blinx is back.

Sort of. In *Blinx 2* you actually design your own Time Sweeper with the brilliant create-a-character mode. You can adjust fur colour, body size, tail length, ass-licking ability - it's all here, apart from that one about the ass.

Once you've done that, it's on with the Story mode in single-player or two-player co-op. You can also kick up to three mates in the catflaps with the fun split-screen Battle mode, but to unlock the best items you'll have to play the Story mode.

The presence of a storyline will come as quite a shock to fans of the original, but don't get too excited. The cutscenes are a little... strange. Remember those weird foreign cartoons dubbed into English that still made no sense? *Blinx 2* is like that. Basically the porky Tom Tom Gang has gone and broken a big Time Crystal, and you have to find the bits.

Like the first game *Blinx 2* is viewed from a third-person viewpoint, and the controls are

↑ He ain't no
pussy - he's a
badass cat. Meow!



↑ The new and improved camera lets you get a good view of every jump and puzzle, which definitely helps when you come up against lasers.

"Sneaking around is daft compared to just shooting cats in the face"

» pretty similar too. The Left stick controls your movement, the A button jumps (and double jumps), and pressing the Right trigger sucks up debris with your vacuum and shoots it back out at enemies. Kill one and he'll dump some Time Crystals you can use to manipulate time. But while things seem superficially similar, *Blinx 2*'s packing a number of improvements over the original.

First off, the shocking camera in the original has been tuned up. Using the Right stick you can sweep around your cat in total freedom, allowing you to judge jumps and avoid obstacles with ease. Then there's the improved combat system. While the original relied on some ropey auto-aim, *Blinx 2* busts out a lock-on system. You're no pussy - pull the Left trigger to target a bad guy, then pull the Left trigger to dispatch him.

Unfortunately, these thoughtful changes haven't been applied to the level design. Each environment is self-contained, which leads to horrifically frustrating moments when you fall off a high platform and you end up back at the start of the level. There's no excuse for this kind of annoying design, and it's compounded by badly placed checkpoints and the fact you can't save your game mid-mission. Boo!

At least the Time Controls are cool, right? Well, not really. It still feels ace watching a demolished bridge moonwalk back to its former glory with sweet 'tick-tock' sound effects, but at the end of the day you've got the same five Controls being used in the same tired ways. Arrows shooting across your path? Hit Pause and batter them away. Need to press two switches at once? Use a Record to

»



↑ Pause is handy for freezing enemies and solving puzzles.

TOO MUCH PORK IS BAD FOR YOUR STEALTH Sneaking, piggy-style

HAVE YOU EVER looked at Sam Fisher or Solid Snake and thought: what that guy needs is some trotters, a curly tail, and a nice bit of crackling on his back? No? Us neither. *Blinx 2* takes the unusual direction of pig-based stealth though, unfortunately, it doesn't quite bring home the bacon. But you do have some nifty tricks up your sleeve...



↑ We lied. You can use one Time Control in the form of a Pause grenade. Freeze!



↑ Cats, eh? Send a clockwork decoy their way and they buy it totally.



↑ Active camo anyone? The Hyper Cloak offers invisibility if you don't run around.



↑ Or you could always just suck the pesky pussies into a bleedin' great Vortex...

Bonus info

MEDALLION CAT

Hidden among the recesses of each level are a bunch of medals. Find them to unlock bonus materials, like comedy movie clips that actually aren't very comedy at all. You can even go back into each level after they're completed to track every last one down.



SHOP TO IT

Both the Time Sweepers and the Tom Toms have a shop plying useful wares. Here you can trade in cash for new weapons, health upgrades, handy power-ups, extra lives and even fashion accessories like earrings and leather jackets. Just what a cat/pig needs.



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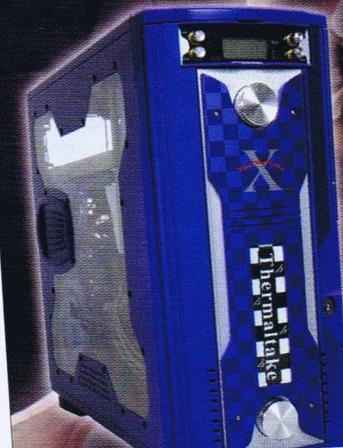
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PREVIEWED: KOTOR 2 > DOOM 3 EXPANSION > MORE!



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While the enemies are definitely an improvement on the blobs of the first game, they're still lacking in charm.

Bonus info

TANKS A LOT

When you play as a Tom Tom you'll eventually get your trotters on a ruddy great tank. It handles a bit like *Halo* 2's Warthogs, except Warthogs fitted with stainless steel tyres driving on a road made from frozen eels. At least it's packing a fat cannon and some sweet heat-seeking missiles.



CATFIGHTS

The multiplayer battle modes are a nice little addition to the main Story mode, though Live play has now been dropped. You can even use Time Controls against your opponents although they can free themselves by wiggling the Left analogue stick like a complete mentalist.

GET REACTIVE Like The Matrix, with cats

ONE FUN NEW addition is the Reactive mini-game. You've got a second to react before you get shredded into Kit-e-Kat...



↑ A cannon pops out of the ground. You can slow down time or freeze it altogether.



↑ But we're loving the Bullet Time as you lean under the shrapnel. Neo? More like Meow.

» make a copy of yourself standing on one, then hop onto the other. New 'Reactives' (see Get Reactive, left) mix things up a bit, but for the most part *Blinx 2*'s Time Controls are stuck in the past.

But there's one more feature we haven't mentioned. Finish the first Time Sweeper mission and suddenly you're a Frazzle-scented member of the Tom Tom Gang. This opens up a whole new game style: think *Splinter Cell* for kids. We're talking diet stealth, with you sneaking past patrolling cats and nicking off with pieces of the Time Crystal.

The main problem with this is that playing as a Tom Tom is nowhere near as much fun as the Time Sweeper missions. You can't even use Time Controls, which are replaced by gadgets that suck enemies into other dimensions or make you invisible (see Too Much Pork Is Bad For Your Stealth,

page 069). There's very little sense of tension, and sneaking around seems daft compared to the effectiveness of just rushing in and shooting cats in the face.

Nevertheless, there are moments in *Blinx 2* when slipping past a tough patrol gives you a sneaky rush, or busting out a Time Control at the right moment makes you feel particularly cool. *Blinx 2* is on par with the original, but the fact is that there are better alternatives out there that don't muddy the platform fun with complicated game mechanics and dull level design - check out *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within* (Issue 34, 9.4). Thing is, cats are far too clever - and we think *Blinx* might be too clever for his own good. What it does offer is an absorbing romp with a twist, but this moggy's not going to conquer the platform world.



↑ Playing split-screen with a pal makes things much easier.

The Summary

BLINX 2: MASTERS OF TIME & SPACE THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- 1 Designing your own Time Sweepers and Tom Toms, coupled with the two-player co-op and four-player split-screen battles adds value.
- 2 A more involving storyline keeps the Time Sweeping action chugging along but it can be a bit confusing, especially for kids.
- 3 The 3D platforming action is fun and the camera behaves like a well-trained kitten, but the levels can be a bit linear and frustrating.
- 4 Time Controls are great to fiddle around with, but there could be a bigger variety in how they're used to solve puzzles.
- 5 Playing as a Tom Tom adds a new oink dimension - it's just a shame that stealth's not as much fun as Time Sweeping.

The Verdict

Cool, colourful platforming that's not quite as clever as it thinks it is. Fun, but not the cat's whiskers.

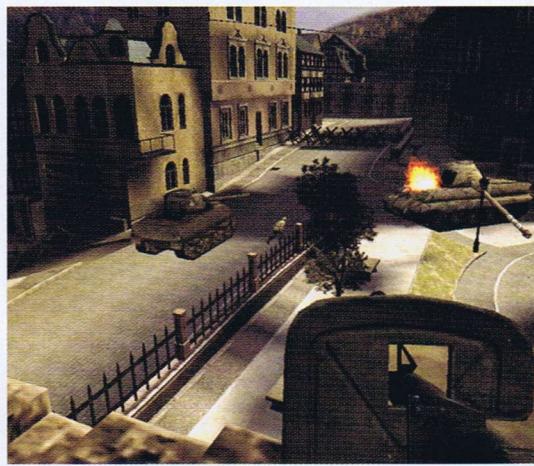
8.0/10



↑ North Africa is a new addition to the series.



↑ The cities will come crumbling to pieces.



↑ When the tanks aim at you, run!

Call of Duty: Finest Hour

Need a good alternative to Medal of Honor? You might find it here.

Words: Asher Moses

Dev: Spark Unlimited	Publisher: Activision
Players: 1-16	Live: 2-16
Release: Out Now	
www.callofduty.com	

In the deluge of WWII-based shooters, the *Call of Duty* (CoD) franchise has done nothing but impress the gaming crowds. Its rich blend of historical detail and fast-paced action obliterates the fiction-filled chaos of *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*, while at the same time moving at a pace that's slightly more frantic and enjoyable than *Medal of Honor*. With the two aforementioned titles making their move from PC to Xbox long ago, it was only a matter of time before CoD finally made its way into our living rooms.

A contributing factor to the success of the CoD franchise has always been the varied nature of gameplay, stemming from the fact that players are able to experience the game from multiple perspectives - Russian, British, American, and now, North African soldiers. The North African campaign is arguably the most enjoyable component of the game, partly because it's an aspect of WWII that's rarely touched upon by other shooters, and also due to its well-crafted missions that include, for example, traversing the desert plains in a jeep or defending the country from Nazi invaders. Being able to play only a couple of missions with each side limits one's ability to empathise with the characters, but the variety it brings to gameplay far outweighs this cost.

Players wield numerous weapons authentic to their respective nations; inventory has space for two primary weapons and a number of accessories like mines and grenades. You'll be using everything in this armoury to do battle in a plethora of arenas,



↑ Fight them on the beaches... and in the sewers.

such as Russia's Red Square and the sunny desert of North Africa, all of which are a showcase of the developer's ability to create stunning environments that boast a rich blend of colours and textures. Character models could've been better, and effects such as explosions are quite mediocre at times. Overall, the developers used the Xbox's hardware to create an aesthetically pleasing game - essential to player immersion. Sound effects aren't bad either, but it would've been nice to see random conversations between NPCs - as featured in *Far Cry* for the PC.

Despite the variety in weaponry, environment and characters, the essence of *Finest Hour* never strays from the core formula - killing hordes of Nazis. Although this is certainly enjoyable on one level, the game's enemy AI fails to challenge players strategically, and the entire game can easily be completed within ten hours by anyone who has picked up a console FPS before. What's more, missions usually consist of escorting an NPC from point A to point B or protecting certain objects, all of which require little more than two hands to complete successfully.



↑ Stalingrad looks the part as the Russians fight for their survival.

Conversely, while enemy AI is fairly poor, your teammates are a contributing factor to success in the game as they clear out rooms with grenades and dispose of sneaky Nazis hiding in the shadows. The ability to direct teammates, as seen in the popular *Rainbow Six* franchise, would have added a more intimate touch, but isn't critical.

Tank-driving features in around 20 per cent of the game, and the driving physics are akin to real-life. Tanks roll along the gravel at a snail's pace and steering takes some getting used to, but their missions are among the best the game has to offer, not unlike the Scorpion levels in *Halo 2*, and provides a welcome arcade-style break from the

Bonus info

WHAT EMPATHY?
Not only do players fill the shoes of multiple nations, but multiple soldiers within these nations as well. So much for connecting with the characters!



↑ Get your kicks out of multiplayer mode.



↑ Designed by former *Medal of Honor* coders, *Finest Hour* thrives on creating scripted, cinematic moments and set pieces.

» harsh reality of warfare. Whether you're shooting down enemy planes, decimating vehicles with your mortar, or mowing down oncoming foot-soldiers with the attached machine guns, fun will be had all round.

Once you're done with the single-player campaign, getting online with Xbox Live is a breeze and allows you to get a little more value out of your purchase. There are eight multiplayer maps capable of housing up to 16-player battles in four different modes - Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, Capture the Flag and Search and Destroy. All of these modes should be self-explanatory, with the exception of Search and Destroy, which basically involves players bombing two enemy targets in a similar fashion to *Counter-Strike*. Thankfully, latency is rarely an issue and each mode is very enjoyable. However, it's unlikely that *Finest Hour*'s multiplayer modes will drag anyone too far away from *Halo 2* or *Rainbow Six 3*.

While it's cleverly disguised by the game's developers, the fact remains that *Finest Hour* offers little more than a standard World War II first-person



↑ The tanks sometimes provide good cover.

shooter that's far less challenging and engaging than the PC parent on which it is based. Sure, it's still enjoyable and extremely handy during those times when you're after little more than a run-and-gun shoot 'em up, but you'll be hard-pressed to find any features that make it really stand-out from similar titles that have been available to Xbox gamers for over a year.

Bonus info



History buffs will appreciate Dennis Haybert's (from TV series '24') voice acting, providing interesting background information before the commencement of each mission.

The Summary



CALL OF DUTY: FINEST HOUR THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- Fast load times and little latency during online play, plus it has some pretty impressive visuals.
- Different theatres of war (not to mention all the different weapons involved) provides excellent variety of play.
- You're constantly changing sides, making it hard to really get into the story or any of the characters.
- There are a lot of multiplayer modes on offer, but the single-player mode can be finished in 10 hours.
- It's not hugely different from the PC original, despite any statements to the contrary.

The Verdict

7.0//10

Solid, *Finest Hour* is an enjoyable World War II first-person shooter that lacks just enough polish to be an Elite game.

PREVIOUSLY: Incoming Issue 35
COMING SOON: Hints & cheats



↑ The streets will be littered with debris by the end of every race.



↑ Pretty it up, then smash it to pieces!



↑ The car-casse will remain right here.

Crash 'n Burn

It's the last thing you want to do in a car...

Bonus info

HATE ROBOTS? PLAY AGAINST HUMANS!

If the game's tedious AI becomes too much of a burden to bear, *Crash 'n Burn* offers online play against up to 15 opponents - an ideal avenue to show off.



your newly tricked out ride.

Words: Asher Moses

Dev: Climax	Pub: Eidos Interactive
Players: 16	Live: 2-16
Players Link	Release: Nov 2004
www.eidosinteractive.com	

After the phenomenal success of *Burnout 3*, launching an arcade racer with an emphasis on destruction is virtually akin to suicide - particularly if that game is as mediocre as *Crash 'n Burn*.

The most intriguing aspect of the game is the fact that, rather than simply beating your opponents to the finish line, the game revolves around a "kill or be killed" mindset where players damage their opponents' cars to force them out of the race, all while getting to the finishing line alive.

Like *Burnout 3*, racing in *Crash 'n Burn* takes place on street circuits, with the intuitive, arcade control system removing any real learning curve, as well as providing convenient access to turbo, gas, steering and break controls during frantic play. However, the game's focus on survival is what differentiates it from *Burnout 3*. While *Burnout*'s approach to destruction is a thrilling aside to the excellent racing climate, the majority of gameplay in *Crash 'n Burn* is based around the consequences of said destruction, with each flying bonnet or bull bar adding another obstacle to the player's survival.

Each race commences with 16 cars on the track, and when enough damage is accumulated on a car, it breaks down and is left on the track to decapitate other unsuspecting drivers. This makes it increasingly difficult to reach the finishing line in one piece, but also means that success in the game is more a product of luck rather than skill.

Tracks are simple recreations of locations in real-world America such as San Francisco and Miami, made somewhat more complex as burning car carcasses litter the road at busy intersections. The result is a series of races that are never entirely identical, which adds the thrill of spontaneity.



↑ Those arrows are useful for DDR... maybe not here, though.

That said, this is only fun for the first couple of hours. The racing eventually devolves into a destruction derby where players who are most adept at bulldozing cars and finding clear lanes will claim victory. What's more, the sole aim of the game's AI seems to be to cause crashes rather than win the race. After several restarts, it really becomes an exercise in tedium.

If you do manage to win a race, the money earned is used to upgrade your car, which can be selected from four different car-types - sports, pickup, muscle and compact. Said upgrades range from cosmetic enhancements (e.g. paint jobs, rims, body kits and spoilers) to performance tweaks, such as an upgraded engine, gearbox or tires. While these upgrades help to maintain interest, the fact that gameplay centres on destroying opponents' cars mean that they have little bearing on the outcome of the race, and are thus only of aesthetic value. While the well-designed car models and interesting locales boosts its score somewhat, it seems that *Crash 'n Burn* lives up to its title for all the wrong reasons.

The Summary

CRASH 'N BURN THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- 1 Arcade-style racing action, but it's not very flash when it comes to visual and sound effects.
- 2 Upgrading the appearance and performance of your car is fun, but it doesn't always translate to better handling.
- 3 Every race is highly unpredictable, making it sometimes as fun and spontaneous as the *Burnout* games.
- 4 The enemy AI has a tendency to focus on wanton destruction, which will kill the experience for some.
- 5 There's a lengthy single-player mode on offer, plus online play for multiplayer sessions.

The Verdict

Some great fun to be had in this destruction derby racer, but there are more frustrations than thrills.

6.4 // 10

PREVIOUSLY: It's the first time we've seriously looked at this game
COMING SOON: Hints & cheats

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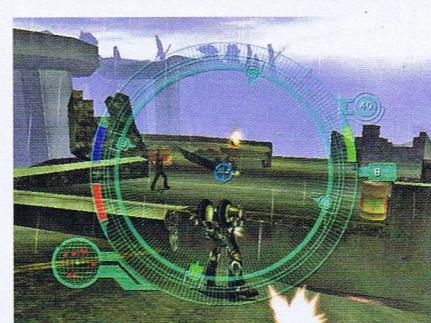
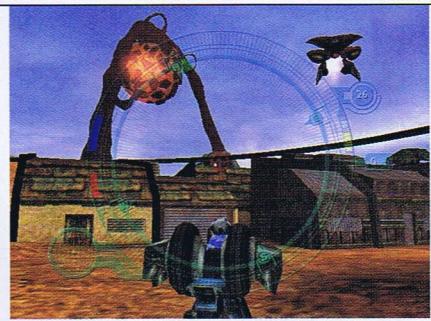
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Robotech Invasion

Fisher-Price first-person fun for the whole family

Bonus info

PAPER BOY

Being a *Robotech* warrior does have its advantages. An hour or two into the action, you get some wheels. By hitting the Y button you can change into a bike armed with homing rockets and make those long walks fly by. It's just a bit strange that you can ride your bike indoors.

Words: Gavin Ogden

Dev: Vicious Cycle	Pub: Take-Two/GL Star
Players 1-2; 2-8 S-Link	Live: 2-8 players
Release: 10 Dec	
www.globalstarsoftware.com/robotechinvasion	

WE ALL ASSOCIATE first-person shooters with an older audience but *Robotech Invasion* is clearly aimed at priming a younger gamer for a career in the genre later in life. It's not quite *Halo* for kids but it's along those lines. The last time a *Robotech* title graced Xbox (*Robotech: Battlecry*, Issue 09, 74), it failed to seriously capture anyone's imagination, though it did sport some lovely cel-shaded visuals for its time.

Fast-forward two years and the anime franchise has taken a striking new direction under the careful guidance of Vicious Cycle. And seeing as though the first-person shooter is well and truly in fashion with gamers at the moment, why not bring out the big guns?

The fun takes places in the 21st century where humans have made a cool discovery known as

Robotech that has made space travel easier than finding your way home on a bus when the bloody Sydney trains are late or cancelled again. But good times soon went bad when we made contact with an alien race called the Invid that's eyeing Earth as its new home. And yep, you guessed it; it's up to you to save the day. Without giving too much away, there are a few surprises along the way, assuming the role of a second character being the biggest.

After firing the game up and jumping straight in we were surprised to see how smooth the first-person controls turned out to be. Too many FPS games are spoilt by bad, twitchy controls. But moving, looking and more importantly shooting are all rock solid in *Invasion*. Gameplay is very linear and the quick pace of the plot doesn't really allow you much time to explore the huge environments. As you can see from the shots on this page, the heads-up-display (HUD) is quite different from other shooters. So different in fact it's a bit on the annoying side because it overwhelms the action on screen. On this display is a big green arrow that constantly lets you know where you should be heading next. It almost feels like your hand's being held all the way through.

There's a lot of repetitive gameplay too that won't challenge anyone who's played at least one shooter before in their gaming career. The gameplay is objective-driven but a lot of the time you'll be doubling back on yourself and shooting the same type of enemies making the whole experience drag rather than excite.

But take this as an FPS that younger gamers will find it easy to get to grips with and you won't go wrong. It's not an exciting, adrenaline-pumping game and it does border on the easy side, but with multiplayer options (online and offline) for up to eight players, we could soon see the birth of tomorrow's generation of FPS warriors. If you're already at that stage though, you won't find this very challenging at all.



The Summary

ROBOTECH INVASION THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- Easy to pick up and get into for the younger gamers but seasoned FPS fans will find this too far easy.
- From a control point of view, everything works well. Good to see that this hasn't been overlooked and makes playing the game painless.
- Plenty of multiplayer options to keep you and your mates busy. From split-screen two-player modes to System Link and Live, it's all here.
- Gameplay quickly becomes a bit on the repetitive side and there isn't enough variation in the weapons.
- Playing as a second character that gives a new perspective adds longevity to the overall experience.

The Verdict

6.0/10

PREVIOUSLY: Incoming - Issue 34
COMING SOON: Hints & cheats

Atari Anthology

The fellas that kicked the whole thing off are at it again

Dev: Atari	Pub: Atari
Players: 1-4	Live: High Scores
Release: Out now	
www.atari.com.au	

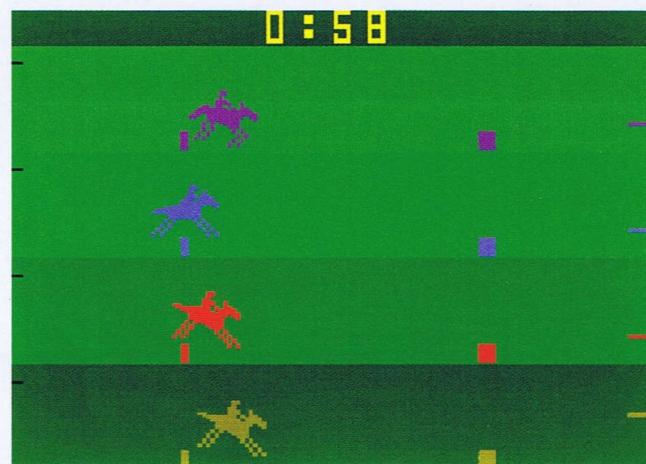
Words: Daniel Kelly

THE LATEST nostalgia trip to hit Xbox invites us to look back at what started all this videogames malarkey off. This anthology packages together arcade and adventure games from the old Atari 2600, with puzzle, sport and action categories totalling 85 challenges.

Atari is often synonymous with *Space Invaders* and the gameplay style it pioneered: baddies at the top of the screen, a small moving gun at the bottom. While a few games here play this way, the adventure section offers more intuitive challenges. In the *SwordQuest* series, for example, the original comics feature in the game, and you can peruse them to find clues to progress through rooms.

The Bonus mode contains scans of old instruction booklets as well as the adverts that accompanied many of the games when they came out. It's a nice idea but the small print in the rulebooks isn't always clear, so if you're not sure how a game plays, consulting the in-game scans won't help much. Neither do the snazzy interface and well-presented options menu distract from the actual game graphics: it all looks very 1983.

Struggling with such primitive challenges when you're a *Halo 2* (Issue 34, 10.0) guru means you'll



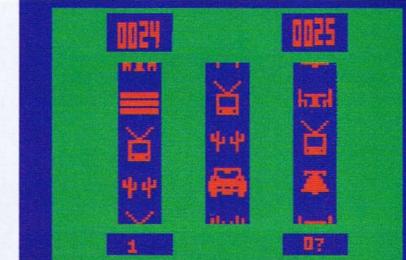
↑ Steeplechase is riveting cliffhanger action, as you can see.

keep going until you fall in love with the simplicity or smash your pad. Don't expect a learning curve either - there isn't one. The joysticks differ in sensitivity in each game, so you can't even get a 'feel' for things. And while there are Live leaderboards, it'll be tough to match the Atari fanatics' scores.

It's worth remembering that however much you cram in, it's quality that counts. Cash isn't even necessary to get hold of half of these babies - a mobile phone or even a pen and paper will suffice (*Hangman*, anyone?). At \$49.95, Xbox has plenty more bang for buck to offer.

Bonus info

VINTAGE
A great added bonus is the option to switch into black and white mode. We recommend you turn off the central heating too.



↑ The Casino section: seasoned gamblers only.

"Don't expect a learning curve - there isn't one"



↑ Check the Maze Craze! Really, it's too much.

The Verdict

Can't compete with today's gaming beastics even at a budget price. One for old-skool Atari addicts only.

4.4/10

Scaler

Reachin' parts other lizard-based platformers can't

Dev: Art. Mind & Mov	Pub: Take-Two
Players: 1	Live: None
Release: Out now	
www.globalstarssoftware.com/scaler	

Words: Andy Irving

A NAME LIKE *Scaler* may not conjure up the most pleasant of images; it's a bit too close to scabies, scabby and scaly for our liking, things we generally go out of our way to avoid. So after prolonging our follicular phobias for as long as possible, we got under the skin of this pleasantly entertaining platformer.

Forget the baffling plot (some nonsense about a kid who, whilst being interrogated by an army general commanded by evil dragons, gets zapped with electricity and turns into a bright blue lizard then gets teleported to the Dragon's home world). We told you not to ask. Instead, kick back and just enjoy the chaos.

If the opium-smoking caterpillar from *Alice in Wonderland* ever designed a game environment, this would definitely be it. Psychedelic clashing colours, giant mushrooms and baddies straight out of *Critters 3* all add up to a truly bizarre experience. Central character Scaler's movement is slipper than a greased-up slapper at a foam party, which becomes pretty frustrating when precision jumping over precarious, tricky platforms. Ranged attacks using Scaler's impressively big, erm, Dragonhood mean his thrashing tongue makes smashing your way through the tons of breakable objects an absolute breeze.

Each level provides a decent enough mix of simple puzzle solving and exhilarating zipping around on the handy vines that link each mini-stage. Scaler has the ability to upgrade various attributes, dependant on the amount of those phenomenally useful golden orbs generic to so many platformers. By destroying specific enemies, Scaler also gains the ability to assume their form. Often vital to progress past certain puzzles, this brilliantly keeps gameplay fresh and varied.

Obviously not the most groundbreaking title out there, but a solid title that, with a bit more concentration on the presentation front, could have scaled the heady highs of platformers.



↑ Use your tongue attacks during the climbing stages.



↑ The breakneck rail levels are brilliant fun.



↑ Explosive eggs set off massive chain reactions.

The Verdict

Very generic but surprisingly fun. The addition of several different characters tips the scales significantly in its favour.

6.3/10

Blowout

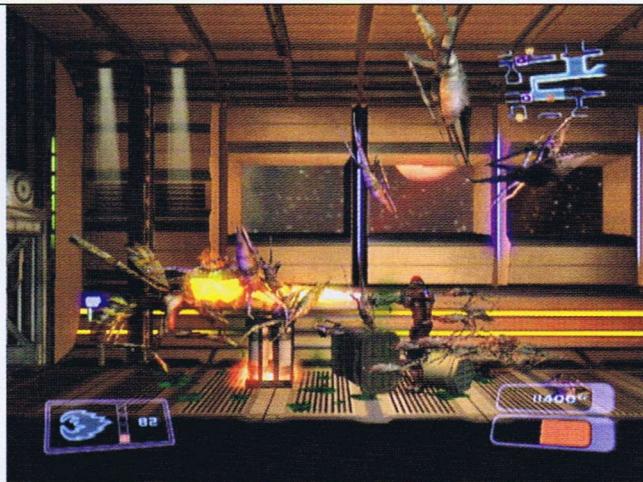
In space, no one can hear you scream... at this game

Dev: Majesco	Pub: Zoo Digital
Players: 1	Live: None
Release: TBA	
www.zoigitalpublishing.com	

Words: Andy Irving

SPACE IS A fairly hefty place. Big enough, indeed, to generate an endless supply of interesting, original games. Not in *Blowout*'s case. The hackneyed plot (which you will quickly lose interest in) involves a gruff-voiced Marine tasked with investigating a deserted spaceship and terminating any rogue 'Xenomorphs' - using that exact terminology. *Aliens*, anyone? Hell, your ship in the opening cutscene even looks just like the dropship in Cameron's classic. It's a shame then, that the developer didn't borrow the stylish presentation from the film as well. Flat textures and bland, repetitive scenery? No, thanks.

As if looking like a PSone game wasn't bad enough, playing like one is an even worse crime in this day and age. Gameplay is merely a case of traipsing through endless labyrinthine corridors, moving between levels with the aid of elevators and your trusty jetpack, and blasting enemies. Ah yes, the enemies. Like crazed rejects from *A Bug's Life*, these overgrown insects swoop and snarl at you, hardly instilling the fear of God. Your response isn't much better, with lacklustre weaponry that includes



↑ That's a strong can of Raid you've got there!

a flamethrower with all the conviction of a wet fart. Your machine-gun overheats after a short time, and we keep expecting Cpl Hicks to pipe up with "short, controlled bursts", such are the *Alien* parallels.

There are several different guns to grapple with, though the fact you have to be completely stationary to switch weapons is a major annoyance, particularly during a firefight. Aiming is a stilted and awkward experience and, after yet another tedious boss battle, the repetitive gameplay does a better job than Temazepan at sending players to sleep.

It was with a fair amount of trepidation that we opened *Blowout*, and tragically, every fear we had was well and truly confirmed. 2D side-scrolling shooters don't really have much place at home on Xbox. Those such as *Blowout* should be cast out of the Xbox residence like a shamed family junkie and take refuge in the last-gen console crack house where they well and truly belong.

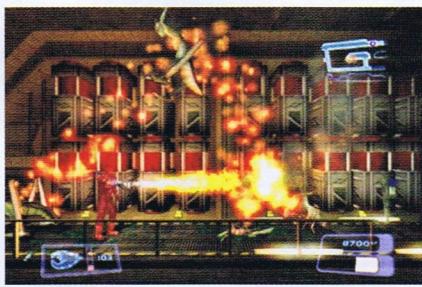
Bonus info

JET SET SOLDIER
Your character has the use of a jetpack, though this has height limitations. Use it to get up and onto nearby ledges and to hover off the ground to avoid enemies' attacks.



↑ Grab a shield to 'bounce' enemy attacks back.

"A flamethrower has the conviction of a wet fart"



↑ Toasted giant ants are a delicacy in space.

The Verdict

A shabby shooter that can't possibly be worth the money. Spend it on something slightly less crap, please.

3.0/10

Yu-Gi-Oh! Dawn of Destiny

For the Destiny's Child in all of us...

Dev: Konami	Pub: Konami
Players 1-2 SLink	Live: None
Release: Out now	
www.uk.konami-europe.com.com	

Words: Andy Irving

SOME THINGS will always baffle adults. The blissful ignorance of youth deems jumping in muddy puddles, smearing your face with chocolate and playing with dog shit to all be perfectly acceptable pastimes. Adults seem even more confused by the obsession many kids have with the trading cards that symbiotically exist with a phenomenally successful cartoon. And if you've ever woken up stupidly early on a weekend (or stumbled in at 8am after a heavy night out), you'll have no doubt seen something of the *Yu-Gi-Oh* phenomenon.

Little YuGi discovers a mysterious pendant in his grandfather's trinket shop that gives him the ability to use various magical powers whilst battling against fellow opponents in his favoured monster card trading game. A virtual version of a real card game will never be as interesting as the real thing, but *Dawn of Destiny* does provide a more involving experience. This is partly due to players trying to make sense of the game, thanks to the annoying absence of a tutorial. Basically a trumped-up version of, well, Top Trumps, players must use their deck of monsters to defeat opponents based on their attacking/defence attributes.

You can set each card to defend (horizontally, face down) or attack (vertically, face up). Spell cards can be stacked behind the Monster cards to enhance their abilities, whilst Trap cards can cancel

out a foe's attack. As soon as a fight is picked, the two creatures will face off dramatically, only for the declared loser to instantly disappear in a puff of smoke/bolt of lightning/uninspiring way. Very disappointing. Each player has a Life Points total, which is depleted every time a monster is defeated, then it's match over. Erm, and that's about it as far as gameplay goes. Multiplayer is available through System Link only which makes for a bit of a lonely experience, though game modes remain the same as the single-player game. If you can make head or tail of the multitude of minor rules and spell/trap combinations, or already enjoy the cartoon, check this out. Anyone over 12, dig out that old algebra textbook for some more interesting bafflement.



↑ Select an attacking monster and bolster your chance with Spell cards.



↑ Don't get on the wrong side of Mr Toadstool. He'll annihilate you.



↑ The Library details every available monster.

The Verdict

Utterly confusing to anyone other than fans. Steer well clear unless *Yu-Gi-Oh* is your idea of top morning TV.

5.0/10

King Arthur

Dude, Where's My Camelot?

Words: James Cotttee

Dev: Krome	Pub: Konami
Players: 1-2	Live: None
Release: Out now	
www.krome.com.au	

BLIND PURSUIT OF realism in films, as in gaming, tends to ask all the wrong questions. In the case of *King Arthur*, the intriguing notion of whether the fabled English king was real has been used to justify a shambles of a flick that, ironically, wasn't particularly believable.

Why, then, does such a travesty need to be immortalised in the pantheon of video gaming? The same reason that Bruckheimer concocted the celluloid turd in the first place: money. Alas, with *King Arthur* gone from cinemas, the momentum of hype has sunk into the swamp of indifference. Fresh memories of the Roman era cavalry epic can no longer harm this game, but it must still stand on its own. This proves to be very shaky ground.

The presentation of *King Arthur* reaches new heights of vulgarity. The menus, loading screens, HUD and voice acting have all the subtlety and nuance of a phone sex ad. FMV from the film is used at length, seamlessly morphing into the showroom dummies with swords we ultimately get to control. One-liners and primitive RPG-style skill progression are the only rewards to play, as the satisfaction of a job well done fails to arise from the assembly line nature of the game mechanics.

You kill, kill, kill, and kill some more. Sometimes the barbarians in the blue paint will hit

you, and sometimes they'll leave magic green vials behind. Sometimes you'll get a combo in, but for the most part you'll be too surrounded and harangued to get a button tap in edgeways. The archery attack mode is somewhat satisfying, but can seldom be used for long thanks to the homing Picts that relentlessly swarm around your avatar. The wandering camera and ever-present British fog hark back to Koei's *Dynasty Warriors*, a superior example of pre-modern combined arms which, if anything, had more believable character models and horse animations.

King Arthur looks dreadful, too. Everything is drab, gray, blocky and uninspiring. The music is fair; a mildly engaging distraction in the moments when the crushing bore of the repetitive challenges isn't grinding the game's appeal into the dust. This is a fitting tribute to the film. What should be entertaining is instead an ordeal.



↑ Get back! My horsey really needs to pee!

Bonus info

SHARE THE PAIN

Co-op is available throughout the game, allowing two



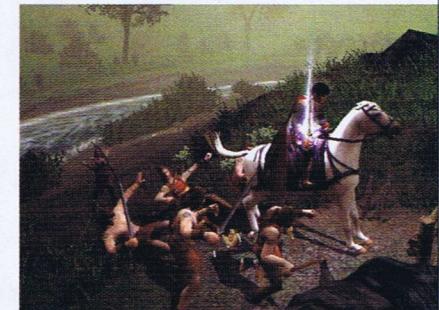
buddies to fight the pagans side-by-side. About as compelling as that other great co-op activity: washing & drying.



↑ No Stinker, let the poor dead man be.



↑ Tsk. It's that bloody horse again.



↑ It's Excalibur. Can't you tell?



↑ "I see your Schwarz is as big as mine!"



↑ "You fools! You've burnt all the booty!"

The Summary



KING ARTHUR: THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- Action is repetitive and stilted. A handful of attacks define play, and getting the upper hand in battle is a frustrating exercise.
- The camera often seems on the side of the enemy. Arrow-throwing barbarians are out of reach merely by virtue of being out of sight.
- Animations (especially faces) look weak. The horses make Monty Python's coconut halves seem convincing by comparison.
- Presentation is quite weak. Garish lighting effects, antique dialogue and low poly count all speak of a troubled production process.
- This is an adaptation of an almost universally reviled movie that has quickly slipped from the mass-media radar.

The Verdict

4.0/10

Vulgar. It's neither a compelling action game nor a poster boy for Aussie game development.

PREVIOUSLY: Nothing before this
COMING SOON: Hints & cheats



↑ The programs think you're responsible for the spread of a devastating virus.



↑ You'll use the disc more than any other weapon. It doesn't drain your energy.

Tron 2.0: Killer App

This FPS doesn't suck, but it does byte

Bonus info

I AM A ROBOT!

You'll meet Mercury during your journey into the mainframe, voice-acted by supermodel Rebecca Romijn-Stamos. She's used to sci-fi, having also played Mystique in the *X-Men 2* movie.



Words: Ben Talbot

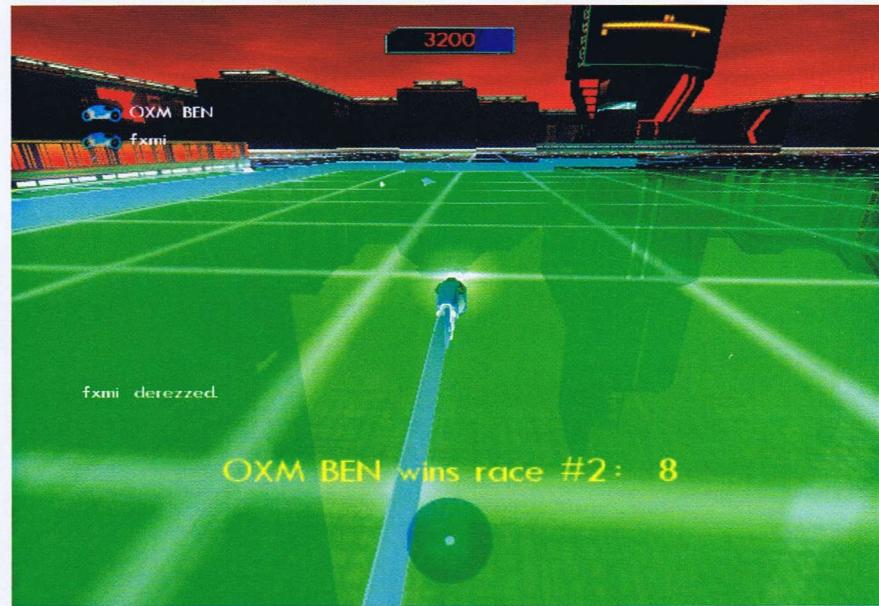
✗ Dev: Climax & Monolith	✗ Pub: Buena Vista
✗ Players 1; 2-4 Split	✗ Live: 2-16 players
✗ Players 2-16 S.Link	✗ Release: TBA
✗ www.tron20.net	

TRON 2.0 is all about computers, perhaps to a greater extent than Climax intended. Unlike most Xbox FPSs that feel like they've been tailored especially for the console, or at least heavily optimised for it, this game plays like a PC game. It's no coincidence. It came out a year ago on PC and despite a tenacious smattering of Live features, hasn't been significantly updated.

Abundant load screens are the most obvious culprits. Most levels are short but loading times often still break the 20-second mark. Frustratingly, the level also reloads after each death, just when you want to jump straight back into the action and get revenge on the virus who de-rezzed you.

Our other major 'glitch' in the system is the targeting. It'd feel more at home on a mouse and keyboard than the Xbox pad. When throwing your lethal disc, the margin for error is tiny, thanks in part to the minuscule crosshair. You need the kind of accuracy only a mouse can provide. It doesn't help that the disc is the only weapon worth using. Most of the others cause a severe drain on your energy and the burden of backtracking to recharge nodes is bigger than the perks of wielding them.

Although the combat is far from inspiring, we are very impressed by the ability to transform into a light cycle. This really shines in multiplayer, where you can both run around on foot or instantly rez up some wheels and mow through the opposition. Alternatively, it's possible to set the game to light cycles only, transforming *Tron 2.0* into an extremely fun throwback of the 1977 Atari game *Surround*. The object here is to force your enemies to crash into your light trail. Racing around the immense, tiled



↑ Racing the light cycles online is the highlight.

arenas is fast, colourful and plays better than ever in 3D. Ironically, this retro-skewed game mode is the most fun part of the entire experience. It's equally surprising that the graphics are so appealing, even though they're based on a film about 20-year-old technology. We guess it's a testament to the vision of the movie that the settings and characters still seem fresh and interesting today. Cool graphical effects including light-bloom also helps.

We also particularly like the upgrade feature which works in a similar way to *Deus Ex: Invisible War*'s biomods. Downloading new abilities and choosing which ones to upgrade means that two players could end up with vastly different characters at the end of the game. It's a shame the upgrade interface is so fiddly.

Tron 2.0 offers plenty to shout about in multiplayer, particularly complete support for Xbox Live 3.0 features including voice messaging. Overall, the multiplayer game modes are far more engaging than the story mode, whose biggest failing is a lack of variety. One for Xbox Live maniacs only.

The Summary

TRON 2.0: KILLER APP THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- 1 Far too much loading in general, and lengthy reloads after you die are a real chore.
- 2 There's a healthy range of Xbox Live 3.0 options and eight different multiplayer game modes.
- 3 Although it's a bit 'retro', the light cycles game mode is still entertaining, especially when played against friends.
- 4 Targeting is a little unforgiving at times and you'll probably only ever use the disc. It's by far the best weapon.
- 5 Upgrading your character with new abilities is a cool feature. The interface is a little daunting at first though.

The Verdict

Tron 2.0 was probably a better PC game than in this Xbox version. Good to see such a comprehensive multiplayer side.

6.8 // 10

PREVIOUSLY: First Look - Issue 30
COMING SOON: Hints & cheats

Fight Club

Live and kicking or the absolute Pitts?

Words: Andy Irving

Dev: Genuine Games	Pub: Vivendi Universal
Players 1-2; 2 S.link	X Live: 2 players
Release: Feb 2005	
www.fightclubgame.com	

ONE OF THE most recited movie quotes of recent years has to be the classic line from David Fincher's movie: "The first rule of Fight Club" Well, we're going to incur the wrath of Tyler Durden by indeed talking about it. If only we had something really nice to say...

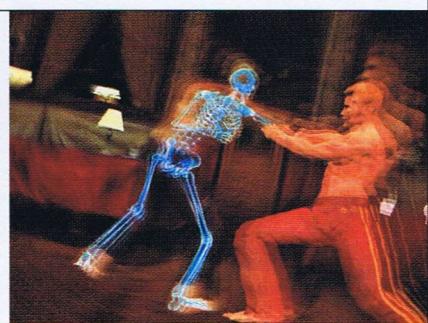
The twisting script was a significant part of what made the film so great, though unfortunately the *Fight Club* game boasts no such editorial genius. The story mode is a tired tale of your anonymous character entering Fight Club, looking for Tyler Durden. Players jet their way around the country, meeting different chapters of Fight Club and fighting their way through just about every person you talk to. Every character from the film is here (including soon-to-be-annihilated Angel Face), and although there may be some visual similarities, the radically different voice acting destroys any illusion of authenticity. The cutscenes themselves aren't much cop either - the narrated comic book-style stills serve to progress the story but are stilted and uninvolving.

Combat itself is painfully slow. Players can choose from Brawler, Grappler or Martial Arts fighting styles, which mixes up gameplay a bit. Each character moves with the agility of bitch-titted Bob wading through concrete, and because *Fight Club* isn't the most flamboyant fighter out there, the

usual array of spectacular special moves is absent. As a result, mano-a-mano action (all this topless scrapping is somewhat homoerotic) is more akin to something like *Rocky Legends* (Issue 33, 8.0), where players must think about accurately landing (and avoiding) punches rather than mindless button-bashing. The upside is thoughtful, tactical combat; the downside is that you can see that swinging roundhouse coming from the middle of last week, and have ample opportunity to block or evade it. Taunting an opponent is a fun feature but, because of the time it takes for your character to register and perform said action, you'll be on the floor before you can say "Come and have a..."

All amateur pugilists have to practise somewhere, so the Training mode gives players the chance to scrap with an unresponsive opponent. That said, normal enemy AI shares the same attributes - winning a bout is merely a question of repeating the same combo against them until they submit. Certain fights call for specific objectives, like breaking an opponent's arm. However, with no explanation as to how to pull off these precision combos, players are left to discover the exact move needed through frustrating trial and error.

But, just like Helena Bonham Carter's character in the film, there's something sluttily alluring about *Fight Club*. We love the way blood splatters all over the screen after a particularly brutal move, only to slowly drip down the 'camera lens' ten seconds later. Multiplayer is much more fun than the standalone game, and caters for both System Link and Xbox Live play. However, two men stripped to the waist can only have so much fun without going any further, and with *Fight Club* unwilling to really push the genre, there's going to be a lot of disappointed greased-up gladiators out there.



↑ Finishing moves are bone-crunchingly brutal.



↑ Low attacks are hard to guard against.



↑ Tyler Durden likes a good old knees-up.



↑ "I'll teach you to cop a feel of my man-boobs!" Bob takes offence at Ricky's advances. The big prude.



↑ The Prince Charming dance: defensively great.

The Summary

FIGHT CLUB THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- 1 Gritty, grappling fighter with the emphasis more on thoughtful combos and counters than button-bashing flurries.
- 2 Both character movement and combo execution is frustratingly slow, translating into a fairly tame fighting experience.
- 3 The front-end menus and general presentation is all very *Fight Club*, but the voice acting couldn't be further removed from the real actors.
- 4 Multiplayer is a real laugh, and both System Link and Xbox Live play provide more buddy-bashing than the average fighter.
- 5 Loads of hidden characters and movies to unlock, but the laborious story mode seems to drag on forever with no sense of reward.

The Verdict

A rough and tumble grappler that fails to capture the film's character or panache. You won't be talking about it too much...

6.4//10

PREVIOUSLY: Playable Demo - Issue 35
COMING SOON: Hints & cheats



↑ Anji's a huge fan of slick 2D combat.



↑ No fighting title is complete without fireballs.



↑ Demonic forces help Eddie unleash attacks.



↑ Venom never mis-cued a ball...



↑ Vanessa's music is bad. I-No's is deadly.

Guilty Gear X2 Reload

There's nothing shameful about 2D when it looks this good



Bonus info

SUPERIOR BEINGS
As well as the 20 playable characters in the game, *Guilty Gear*



features unlockable EX characters. These bad boys are enhanced versions of the regular Gears, and boast some pretty devastating Special moves.

Words: Andy Irving

Dev: Arc Software	Pub: Zoo Digital
Players 1-2	Live: 2 players
Release: TBA	Live: Scoreboards
www.guiltygearx2reload.com	

THE LAND OF the Rising Sun produces its fair share of 2D beat 'em ups, so it's no surprise the brilliant *Guilty Gear X2 Reload* comes with all the usual Japanese juxtapositions. Break-neck guitar? Check. Incomprehensible, convoluted relationships between characters? Check. Stylish artwork, astoundingly deep combat system and brilliant multiplayer? Triple check.

The Guilty Gears are an eclectic bunch. The product of fused animal and human DNA, these rogue bioweapons are now self-aware, and out for the old clichéd revenge. But don't dismiss this as another run of the mill beat 'em up; this is an unbelievably deep, complex and technical fighter. Intuitive controls mean beginners will have instant access to the stunning regular moves each Gear boasts, and casual gamers could probably button-bash their way through the first few matches.

However, Down, Towards and Strong punch don't even scratch the surface of what's possible to pull off, and the tons of outlandish Special moves are an absolute visual spectacle to behold. Often numbering six or seven button presses at a time, this title is aimed at hardcore fans of the genre - if you've got the digit dexterity, you'll be rewarded with a fantastically frantic, exhilarating experience.

Along with the standard health meters, several other gauges keep the fighting fresh. The feral freaks have quite a temper, and as such have Tension and Burst meters. Take hits or dish out your own brand of punishment onto your opponent, and these will gradually fill. The Tension meter is especially cool. Once full, players can unleash a devastating Instant Kill. This quick and satisfying death on a stick (or

guitar/snooker cue/elaborate extension of character) encourages aggressive gameplay. Wusses who block every attack will rapidly fill the Guard gauge - the fuller the meter, the more damage you take. The game is weighted towards attacking strategies, but by ensuring players learn many more combos and Special moves, thus really benefiting from the deep nature of the game, this is only a good thing.

The comprehensive game modes are anything but two-dimensional, but obviously include standard Arcade and Two-player Versus. Story mode fills us in on the wonderfully abstract and tenuous relationship between each Gear, while Mission allows players to battle through the other Gears with fights governed by variable parameters, like combo damage and time restrictions. Each of these permutations (there are 100 in all) is brilliantly balanced - one player may have gradually depleting health, but boast double overdrive damage to compensate.

Multiplayer is, of course, a prerequisite of any fighter, and *Guilty Gear* boasts full online play in addition to the normal two-player mode. Impressive, we're sure you'll agree and, in short, that's what *Guilty Gear X2 Reload* genuinely is. It is a victim of its own strengths by being so technical that it may alienate casual gamers, but purists won't find a more technical fighter out there. Top Gear.



↑ Throw a mid-air fireball then lay into a combo.

Massively deep and complex fighter. Put the effort in though and you'll be rewarded with immensely satisfying moves.

Although only a 2D fighter, the game benefits from lush animations and stunning special moves. Wow factor included.

Tension Gauges and Instant Kills put a varied spin on the regular beat 'em up gameplay.

Loads of different match options - Mission modes in particular are well balanced yet still brutally tough to break.

Xbox Live play present, though be warned against picking a fight against a seasoned Gear player - you'll get instantly whupped.

The Summary

GUilty GEAR X2 RELOAD THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- 1 Massively deep and complex fighter. Put the effort in though and you'll be rewarded with immensely satisfying moves.
- 2 Although only a 2D fighter, the game benefits from lush animations and stunning special moves. Wow factor included.
- 3 Tension Gauges and Instant Kills put a varied spin on the regular beat 'em up gameplay.
- 4 Loads of different match options - Mission modes in particular are well balanced yet still brutally tough to break.
- 5 Xbox Live play present, though be warned against picking a fight against a seasoned Gear player - you'll get instantly whupped.

The Verdict

At first glance, it's fun and frantic. Dig a little deeper and this superior fighter significantly shifts up a gear. Class.

8.4 / 10

PREVIOUSLY: None - we got well and truly schooled by this fighter
COMING SOON: Live update & Hints

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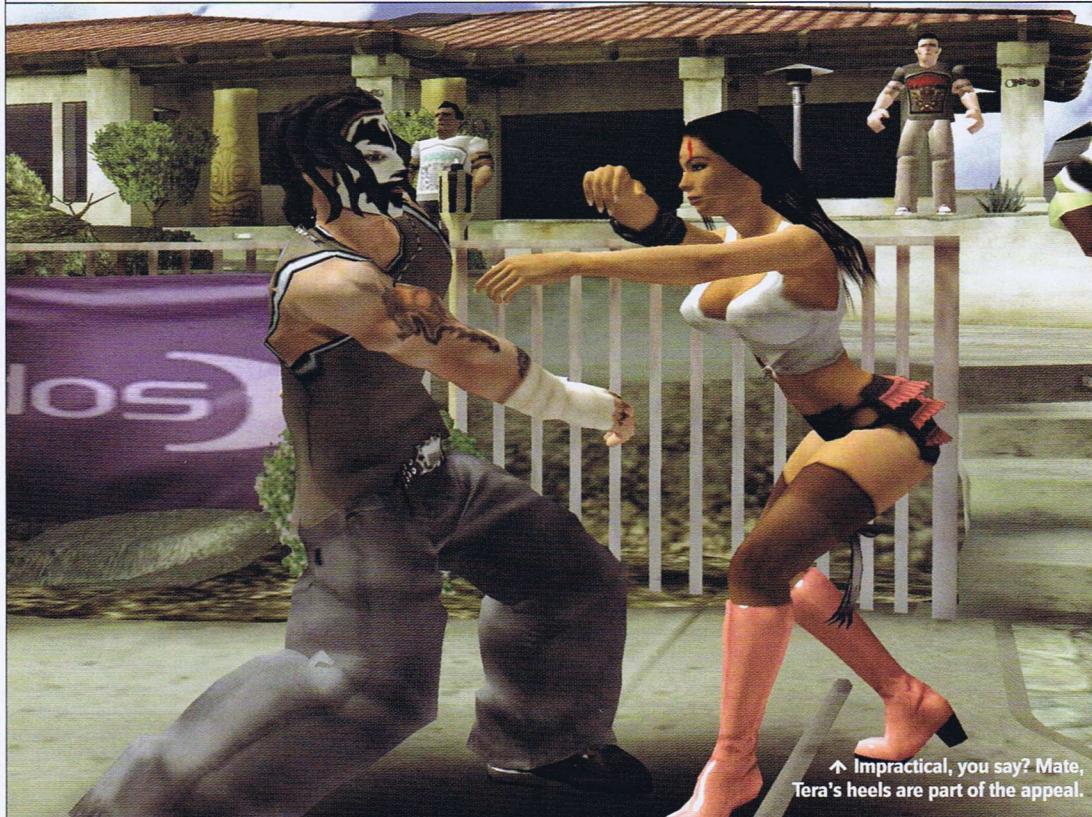
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BACARDI



Backyard Wrestling 2: There goes the neighborhood

When "laying the smack down" gets a tad out of hand...

Bonus info

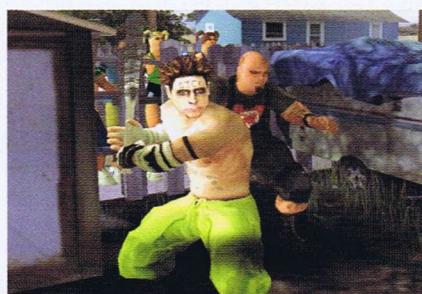
COUNTER ME THIS!

To escape a grapple or throw, just pull the L and R triggers together. It'll drain your turbo meter, but it'll save you a lot of pain. The same two triggers can also be used to counter any striking attacks by pushing your opponent a short distance away.

Words: Rachel Longbow

Dev: Paradox	Pub: Eidos Interactive
Players 1-2	Live: None
Release: Out Now	
X www.bwygame.com	

A A bizarre celebration masked men and digitally licensed porn stars, *Backyard Wrestling 2* is a suburban brawler that's got the words "bad" and "taste" written all over it. It does have a few things going in its favour, though - it's an extreme alternative to the only other pro-wrestling game on the market, it's loaded with licensed music and there are over twenty licensed characters to play as; and when left running on the television, it looks like it could be kind of fun to play. But if you actually pick up the controller and play it, you'll find that it clotheslines itself in all the same areas as its predecessor.



↑ Kids, don't try this silliness at home...

The meat of the game comes in the form of the career mode, where players travel between different suburban and domestic environments to beat seven shades of shinola out of the next opponent. The jaggy visuals are terribly bland and collision detection is unforgivably off the mark. For one thing, kicks and punches will connect from completely unpredictable positions and distances. Limbs and bodies will even randomly clip against objects in the background, which is especially bad because one of the game's major highlights is the ability to damage the environment and use certain background implements as a weapon (poles, wooden planks, lawnmowers and the like).

The combat system doesn't make a great deal of sense either. The damage done by different attacks is relatively inconsistent, so the only certain method of winning is to continually kicking an opponent in the head when they're down. It's now possible to block an attack - but it would've been more interesting if CPU-controlled fighters would use the move.

The most unforgivable fault, however, are the unresponsive controls. You'll be mashing your thumbs into the control pad, pleading for your moves to come out. You'll give up. And then you'll find that mashing the control pad into your forehead will achieve the same results. This is the last straw when it comes to sloppy game design - the fact that a game can't even perform its most basic function of using the control interface to elicit a commonsense response on the screen. *Backyard Wrestling 2* kind of gets there with the basics, but never actually does. What this game really needed was an extra three months for the coders at Paradox to tighten up every aspect of the game.



↑ "I swear, I won't touch your dog again!"

The Summary

BACKYARD WRESTLING 2 THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- 20+ licensed characters, including a certain flesh-puppet named Tera Patrick (get Googling, boys), who'll appeal to a certain kind of crowd.
- There's a two-player mode, but no four-player mode, which is a wasted opportunity as far as multiplayer is concerned.
- You can play a dinosaur 2D fighter like *Street Fighter* on Live, but not *Backyard Wrestling 2*. Online play could've been a lot of dumb fun.
- Backyard Wrestling 2* has a Create-A-Wrestler mode that lets you custom-build your own fighting machine.
- Licensed artists include Hoobastank, Kool Keith, TSOL and Andrew WK, who liven up the atmosphere with their tunes.

The Verdict

Mildly amusing at times, but *Backyard Wrestling 2* takes the genre down to new lows.

4.0/10

PREVIOUSLY: Incoming - Issue 29
COMING SOON: Hints & cheats

“AFTER A HARD DAY SAVING EARTH, I LIKE TO KICK BACK WITH A COPY OF *T3*...



... it's got the scoop on all the latest gadgets, from home cinema systems to MP3 players, mobile phones and computer hardware. This issue I'm looking forward to the verdict on Sony's iPod killer and half a dozen other portable music players. Plus, there's a story on why DVD's days are numbered – and you know I always like to be prepared for the future! Motorola's newest 3G phone looks like the one I've been waiting for, too. It will be nice to be able to take video calls from Miranda at last. If I leave a couple of plasma grenades at home, I should even have room for it on my utility belt."

Australia's best gadget magazine
ON SALE DEC 15



Elite Directory

The best of Xbox games that scored 8.5 and more!



AMPED 2
REVIEWED: Issue 22
TYPE: Extreme sports
"Stunning graphics. Dead easy to pick up and play but furiously addictive!"
SCORE 8.9 XBL: ★★★★



COLIN MCRAE RALLY 04
REVIEWED: Issue 21
TYPE: Driving
"Rallying at its grandest, prettiest and most absorbing. The best rally game ever made!"
SCORE 9.1



DEATHROW
REVIEWED: Issue 06
TYPE: Future sports
"A tragically under-marketed sports game that's perfect for Speedball fans of old!"
SCORE 9.3



MASHED
REVIEWED: Issue 30
TYPE: Racing
"Without doubt one of the finest multiplayer games ever, but single-player is a bit weak!"
SCORE 8.6



BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE
REVIEWED: Issue 08
TYPE: Action RPG
"Absorbing RPG with a healthy dose of hack 'n' slashing"
SCORE 8.5



CRIMSON SKIES
REVIEWED: Issue 22
TYPE: Action
"A great package that's been playtested to death - and it looks gorgeous!"
SCORE 8.9 XBL: ★★★★



GRAND THEFT AUTO DOUBLE PACK
REVIEWED: Issue 23
TYPE: Driving
"PS2 port, but a benchmark of crime titles yet to be beaten!"
SCORE 9.3



MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE
REVIEWED: Issue 25
TYPE: Action/Shooter
"Definitive blockbuster action title bursting with new ideas!"
SCORE 9.2



BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
REVIEWED: Issue 25
TYPE: Adventure
"Diverse and delicious. This isn't about violence, but about story, subterfuge and character!"
SCORE 8.9



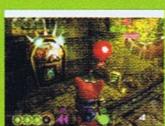
DEAD OR ALIVE 3
REVIEWED: Issue 01
TYPE: Beat 'em up
"Accessible, slick and as satisfying as any beat 'em up. This is a visual benchmark!"
SCORE 8.5



HALO
REVIEWED: Issue 01
TYPE: FPS
"Quite simply, a masterpiece and without question one of the best games ever made!"
SCORE 9.7



MOTOGP 2: URT
REVIEWED: Issue 15
TYPE: Bike racing
"Stupendous visuals. Brilliant bike customisation. So thrilling it'll make your knees bleed!"
SCORE 8.9 XBL: ★★★★★



BLINX: THE TIME SWEEPER
REVIEWED: Issue 08
TYPE: Platformer
"Takes platform gaming into uncharted territory. Essential!"
SCORE 9.2



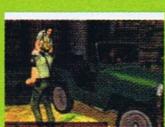
DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR
REVIEWED: Issue 25
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Mind-blowing, expertly crafted experience. Don't miss it!"
SCORE 9.0



BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER
REVIEWED: Issue 04
TYPE: Action adventure
"A brilliant use of the Buffy license for a beat 'em up!"
SCORE 8.9



INDYCAR SERIES
REVIEWED: Issue 18
TYPE: Driving
"You won't find a better racing sim on Xbox. Very technically demanding!"
SCORE 8.6



BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON
REVIEWED: Issue 23
TYPE: Adventure
"A detective game that will stick with you after you've finished!"
SCORE 9.0



ENTER THE MATRIX
REVIEWED: Issue 16
TYPE: Action
"A slick action romp that genuinely adds something new to the licence!"
SCORE 8.5



FIFA FOOTBALL 2004
REVIEWED: Issue 23
TYPE: Sports
"Incredible player models, fluid animation, ridiculously pretty. The best Xbox footy title!"
SCORE 8.7



JET SET RADIO FUTURE
REVIEWED: Issue 01
TYPE: Platformer/Extreme sports
"Supremely playable and very stylish. Huge, intricate levels!"
SCORE 8.9



BRUTE FORCE
REVIEWED: Issue 15
TYPE: Squad-based shooter
"Multiplayer elevates Brute Force from a good to a potentially great game!"
SCORE 9.4



BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT
REVIEWED: Issue 16
TYPE: Driving
"A classic arcade racer that makes you sweat and grin!"
SCORE 8.9



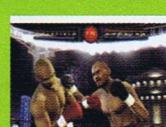
FIGHT NIGHT 2004
REVIEWED: Issue 27
TYPE: Sports
"Absorbing, sweat-drenched title. Dazzling graphics and a groundbreaking control system!"
SCORE 8.6



NINJA GAIDEN
REVIEWED: Issue 27
TYPE: Action
"Groundbreaking beat 'em up of the highest calibre. A must for anyone who can hold a pad!"
SCORE 9.5



CHAMP MANAGER: SEASON 01/02
REVIEWED: Issue 02
TYPE: Sports
"Easily the best game of its kind...indefinite lifespan!"
SCORE 8.8



FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR
REVIEWED: ISSUE 28
TYPE: Strategy
"Fantastic strategy. Captures the visceral atmosphere of war!"
SCORE 8.9 XBL: ★★★★



X-MEN LEGENDS
REVIEWED: Issue 33
TYPE: Action RPG
"A welcome blend of fighting and role-play for the comic book series!"
SCORE 8.5



MADDEN NFL 2004
REVIEWED: Issue 21
TYPE: US sports
"Stunning rendition no Gridiron fan should underestimate. Looks and sounds real!"
SCORE 9.3



KINGDOM UNDER FIRE: THE CRUSADERS
REVIEWED: Issue 33
TYPE: Strategy
"Bloody and beautiful, with a superb atmosphere!"
SCORE 8.9



MADDEN NFL 2005
REVIEWED: Issue 33
TYPE: Sports
"The best Madden game ever. No joke. NFL fans will be thoroughly satisfied!"
SCORE 9.3



SOUL CALIBUR II
REVIEWED: Issue 19
TYPE: Fighting
"Stunning visuals, great characters and fantastic animation make this an essential title for all true fight fans."
SCORE 9.4

CAPCOM VS SNK 2 EO
REVIEWED: Issue 13
TYPE: Fighting
"The best 2D fighter you'll find on Xbox!"
SCORE 9.0



STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT
REVIEWED: Issue 33
TYPE: Shoot 'em up
"This is a game no Star Wars fan can afford to miss."
SCORE 8.7



TOP 5... Beat 'em ups

Liven up your punch with these cheeky little numbers!



ROCKY Make your fight sessions even more special with this legendary bruiser starring the most famous film fighter ever! Issue 09, SCORE 9.0



SF ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION This classic series refuses to die and Third Strike is absolute 2D perfection. Issue 34, SCORE 9.2



NINJA GAIDEN Although it has fantastic adventure elements, the fighting core makes this one tough beat 'em up to master. Issue 27, SCORE 9.5



SOUL CALIBUR II Stunning visuals, great characters and fantastic animation make this an essential title for all true fight fans. Issue 19, SCORE 9.4



DEAD OR ALIVE 3 An oldie but a goodie. Look out for *Dead or Alive Ultimate* coming your way soon, too. Issue 01, SCORE 8.5



PHANTOM CRASH
REVIEWED: Issue 09
TYPE: Mech shooter
"Extremely enjoyable. Frantic action backed up with an impressive career mode"
SCORE 8.6



PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME
REVIEWED: Issue 25
TYPE: Adventure
"The Prince is the new King of platformers. Truly outstanding"
SCORE 9.4



PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2
REVIEWED: Issue 22
TYPE: Driving
"Gorgeous and ace to play. The definitive driving experience"
SCORE 9.3 XBL: ★★★★★



NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND
REVIEWED: Issue 23
TYPE: Racer
"Fast and furious - a great underground racer"
SCORE 8.9



RALLSPORT CHALL. 2
REVIEWED: Issue 28
TYPE: Driving
"Edge-of-your-seat racer. Looks and plays great, with brilliant Xbox Live multiplayer"
SCORE 9.2 XBL: ★★★★



SPLINTER CELL
REVIEWED: Issue 08
TYPE: Action-adventure
"The original and the best. Marks an exciting new direction in stealth gaming"
SCORE 9.7



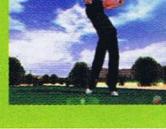
FABLE
REVIEWED: Issue 32
TYPE: RPG
"Incredibly deep. Demands to be replayed several times over. Utterly gorgeous"
SCORE 9.7



RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN
REVIEWED: Issue 15
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Superb single-player; outstanding on Xbox Live"
SCORE 9.2 XBL: ★★★★★



ROCKY
REVIEWED: Issue 09
TYPE: Sports
"Brilliantly evocative, this is dramatic multiplayer scrapping at its finest"
SCORE 9.0



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005
REVIEWED: Issue 33
TYPE: Sports
"Drives the perfect line between sim and arcade fun"
SCORE 8.7



BURNOUT 3
REVIEWED: Issue 32
TYPE: Driving
"Arcade racing has never been so incredibly and dangerously fun. Must-have material"
SCORE 9.2



FIGHT NIGHT 2004
REVIEWED: Issue 27
TYPE: Sports
"Fluid, fast and extremely fun to play. A much needed booster shot for the genre"
SCORE 8.6



SOUL CALIBUR II
REVIEWED: Issue 19
TYPE: Beat 'em up
"The most fluid fighter ever. Easy to pick up, tough to master, graphically superb"
SCORE 9.4



SPIDER-MAN
REVIEWED: Issue 03
TYPE: Action
"Huge environment to explore - you'll be smashing and swinging in no time"
SCORE 8.8



SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW
REVIEWED: Issue 25
TYPE: Action adventure
"Enhances everything that was good about the original"
SCORE 9.4



STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC
REVIEWED: Issue 20
TYPE: RPG
"One of the most compelling games on any console ever"
SCORE 9.5



NBA 2K3
REVIEWED: Issue 14
TYPE: Sports
"A solid basketball game with all the fundamentals. Great presentation, too!"
SCORE 9.0



SUDEKI
REVIEWED: Issue 31
TYPE: RPG
"One of the best-looking games on Xbox. A brilliant, vibrant adventure romp with great AI"
SCORE 8.7



THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: EFB
REVIEWED: Issue 29
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Intuitive controls. Stylish, atmospheric and violent"
SCORE 9.1



OUTRUN 2
REVIEWED: Issue 33
TYPE: Racing
"Top-notch racer with brilliant controls. Perfect for fans new and old"
SCORE 8.5



TLoTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING
REVIEWED: Issue 22
TYPE: Action
"Recreates the film beautifully. A blockbuster action game"
SCORE 9.1



THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS
REVIEWED: Issue 29
TYPE: Stealth
"Captivating, atmospheric, with massive replayability"
SCORE 8.6



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2003
REVIEWED: Issue 11
TYPE: Sports
"Great swing system. Loads of modes. Fantastic courses"
SCORE 8.5



TIMESPLITTERS 2
REVIEWED: Issue 09
TYPE: First-person shooter
"The most complete FPS package on Xbox. Rife with features. Just buy it"
SCORE 9.3



V8 SUPERCARS 2
REVIEWED: Issue 27
TYPE: Racing
"The most realistic, detailed racer ever. Gorgeous graphics, incredible variety and handling"
SCORE 9.5 XBL: ★★★★



NFL 2K3
REVIEWED: Issue 14
TYPE: Sports
"A great game, but possibly too much of a challenge for the novices"
SCORE 9.2



TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON: ISLAND THUNDER
REVIEWED: Issue 21
TYPE: Squad-based shooter
"Atmospheric with online play"
SCORE 8.5 XBL: ★★★★



TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3
REVIEWED: Issue 22
TYPE: First-person shooter
"The ultimate package for fans of realism-based FPSs"
SCORE 9.3 XBL: ★★★★★



TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX: BLACK ARROW
REVIEWED: Issue 31
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Looks ace and only \$50!"
SCORE 9.0



CONFLICT VIETNAM
REVIEWED: Issue 33
TYPE: Squad shooter
"Bigger and tougher than Desert Storm. Fans of the genre will love it"
SCORE 8.5



TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND
REVIEWED: Issue 22
TYPE: Extreme sports
"Refreshingly different and diverse. Hop off and explore!"
SCORE 8.8



TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 4
REVIEWED: Issue 09
TYPE: Extreme sports
"Silky trick system. Absolutely tons to do, and then some"
SCORE 9.0



TOP SPIN
REVIEWED: Issue 21
TYPE: Sports
"Incredible detail. Hands down this is the best tennis game in the world"
SCORE 9.0 XBL: ★★★★



UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP
REVIEWED: Issue 10
TYPE: First-person shooter
"This sets a new standard for multiplayer shooters"
SCORE 9.2 XBL: ★★★★



WAKEBOARDING UNLEASHED FEAT. SHAWN MURRAY
REVIEWED: Issue 17
TYPE: Extreme sports
"Outrageous arcade action"
SCORE 8.6



WORLD CHAMP. SNOOKER 2004
REVIEWED: Issue 31
TYPE: Sports
"Tension-filled fun for anyone remotely interested in snooker"
SCORE 8.8 XBL: ★★★



XIII
REVIEWED: Issue 22
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Unique, stylish and captivating. You can't afford to miss this superb FPS"
SCORE 8.6 XBL: ★★★



COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2005
REVIEWED: Issue 3
TYPE: Racing
"A blend of arcade and simulation racing"
SCORE 8.5



HALO 2
REVIEWED: Issue 34
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Style and substance in equal measure. An absolutely flawless game!"
SCORE 10.0



PRINCE OF PERSIA 2: WARRIOR WITHIN
REVIEWED: Issue 34
TYPE: Adventure
"Platforming at its best. As good as the original."
SCORE 9.4



Full interactive Reviews Directory

The ultimate guide to Xbox games...
We've slipped it onto our disc

If you forget what any of the different colours mean, press the Y button to bring up a handy help menu.

The bottom bar indicates the game type, the issue the review appeared and the review score out of ten.

A game highlighted in orange is Xbox Live-enabled. A game in bright green is an Xbox Elite title. The scroll bar indicates how far down the list you are. You can progress one game at a time with the D-pad.

REVIEWS DIRECTORY

Press Y for help

Bike racing - Issue 17 - 9.4/10

MTV MUSIC GEN. 3

Essential for anyone with aspirations of headlining at Ministry. Playable and friendly.

Music - Issue 30 - 8.5/10

MTX MOTOTRAX

Ace sense of speed, loads of tricks and very rewarding, but hell to get to grips with.

Bike racing - Issue 29 - 8.1/10 - Live features ***

MX SUPERFLY

Much better than MX2002 but far from being a classic biking game.

Bike racing - Issue 13 - 6.5/10

MX UNLEASHED

A very solid and enjoyable, if unspectacular racer. Boasts that 'one more go' factor.

LiveReviews

We take a look at recently reviewed Xbox Live-enabled games and rate their online performance



Men of Valor

Love long loading times? You'll love this...

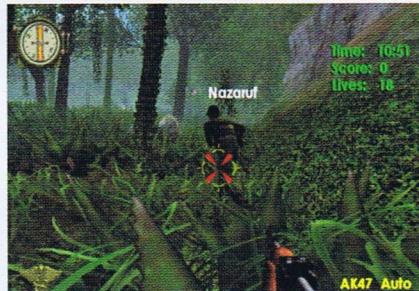
ONLY ON XBOX

Reviewed: Issue 35 | Score: 7.1
Players: 2-8 | Live: 2-8 players

Men of Valor load times - bad offline, worse Live. Once a match is running it's acceptable three-star fodder, but getting there is something of a haul.

Navigation through the menu systems is fine, but there seems to be no end of tedious loading times between them. Once you find a match and join, if you're too slow off the mark someone can nip in and take your place. Then you either get put in Spectator mode and just watch the match, or worse, you're forced out of Live and back to the game's main menu. And it's back to the grind of those loading times again.

Once connection is made, *MOV* is fluid and varied. Whether you're in a squad crawling towards an encampment on your belly or raging around capturing spawn points, it's all pretty good. There also seems to be a following for *MOV* on Live, so there's never a shortage of gunslingers offering their services as either snipers, infantrymen, or Marines.



↑ Following a team member will provide cover.

It's worth pointing out, however, that in the darker, leafier levels it can be hard to distinguish between friend or foe. Even when you're shooting an ally in the face at close range, there's very little to dissuade you from stopping - apart from them putting you out of your crazed mind with a well-placed bullet. But persist and you'll be rewarded with a couple of hours' mindless killing as a result. Hardly groundbreaking, but an effective enough use of Live nonetheless.



↑ Be careful not to shoot your own men by accident. They're smart, you know - they'll quickly finish you if you're not careful!

The Verdict

Let down by the loading times and quit-outs, *Men of Valor* should have been better on Live than the way it turned out.

3/5

Street Fighter: Anniversary Collection

Street Fighter Live? Didn't this die a few years ago?

Reviewed: Issue 34 | Score: 9.2
Players: 1-2 | Live: 2 players

WHILE CUTTING-EDGE Xbox games sweep across Xbox Live, it's great to know that the hardcore fanbases of classic titles, such as *Street Fighter*, can still indulge their fanaticism online. But, whereas *Street Fighter* can be enjoyed purely in a retro fashion, it seems there has been very little effort to make the series a true online contender. Just because the franchise is old, doesn't mean permission is given for the Live capabilities to lounge in the same category. Once we were online Chun-Li and chums managed a fairly healthy canter on what legs they have left, but when it comes to options, the choices are meagre.

Optimatches and quickmatches were easily accessible, and you can create any number of stupid rules and regulations on the Optimatch option screen too (*Street Fighter* fans will probably be so desperate to play you they'll accept any constraints you lay down). Beyond that, and beyond the shouting down the headset you'll encounter when you dragon punch someone in the chest, this is effectively exactly the same offline as it is online. That's pretty darned good in the sense that there's no lagging, and it's great that you can fight anyone with any character to prove your abilities, but unless you're the kind of person who studies every



↑ Good old Ryu sees off an opponent from, most likely, Spain.

last move to work out when they should and shouldn't be used, it just seems pointless. Live almost seems like a life support system for this game. If you're lucky enough to find someone who's as passionate about a regular round as you are (like Matt), consider yourself lucky.



↑ You'll whack your way across the world!



↑ "Please, I need a manicure badly!"

The Verdict

Works perfectly well if you can find someone to play with. With no new content though, it's of limited appeal.

2/5

Ford Racing 3

Everything they do can be driven online by you

ONLY ON
XBOX

IT SEEMS NOWADAYS that every racer worth its salt is pulling on to the online highway. And not just the blockbuster titles either. Like a possessed parent late on the school run, budget racers are now aggressively nudging their way into the online overtaking lane. *Ford Racing 3* was one such title, a budget game that actually provided a fair few thrills and spills and put several other full-priced racers to shame.

Every track from the game is available online (all 26 of them), from the beautiful Mountain Side to the not quite as picturesque Oil Refinery. One great feature of *Ford Racing 3* was the ability to race tons of different Ford models from throughout the company's history. Again, loads of different classes are on offer (Classic, Off-Road, Performance and so on), though annoyingly, players must unlock the majority of these in the single-player game. Sure, one car is available from each class, but to get your hands on the real throaty beasts you've got to put it in with the offline mode. The upside is you're forced to work through the great career mode; the downside is that newbies will seriously struggle against those gamers who've clocked the game.

Again, the game modes on offer are fairly limited, and although collisions can be turned off,



↑ Collisions can be turned off when playing online, so using the car in front as a brake when approaching corners won't work.

a maximum of only six players can race at any one time. This does, however, keep races smooth and zipping along at a fairly respectable pace, so on balance it's not a bad little Live title. And since it's priced at \$49.95, you could do a lot worse for an online racer.



↑ Every track from the offline mode is here.



↑ Less players = smoother action.

The Verdict

A competent, if admittedly basic racer that, despite lacking any real flair or polish, is a snip at \$49.95.

3/5

FlatOut

Dirty destruction on a worldwide scale

XReviewed: Issue 35 **X**Score: 8.0
XPlayers: 1; 2 Split **X**Live: 2-8 players
XPlayers: 2-8 SLink

A SOLID LESSON in demolition derbying, *FlatOut* was a manic mix of metal-crunching madness and sickening sound effects to match. This was a dirty slice of the American Deep South, and we liked it a lot. Now we can yeehaw and squeal our excitement like Boss Hog was our daddy online, all from the comfort of our living rooms and without fear of reprisal from the local yokels. *FlatOut* on Xbox Live is great.

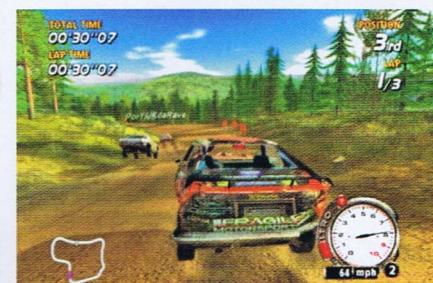
All the madcap antics of the offline derby game remain. Players can specify numerous options, like handling, track type, upgrades and ragdoll release (why on God's green earth would you turn it off?). Racing up to seven other competitors is smooth and glitch-free, and with collisions looking and sounding satisfyingly brutal. Take out other hotheads and laugh pompously at them down your headset. The trackside debris you disturb remains on the road for the duration of the race, again providing tonnes of different gameplay variations and spontaneous driving challenges.

If *FlatOut* falls, well, flat on any levels [we've only heard this joke 80 times - Ed], it's the lack of any different or varying game modes. Sure, racing against seven other human-controlled cars is a real



↑ Infuriate other drivers by spinning them into the roadside scenery.

blast, but time trials, downloadable ghosts or even new cars would've been nice. Again, players can take their upgraded cars online, and with online scoreboards to compare notes against other racers, *FlatOut* is a very respectable Live game. Buckle up for this belter.



↑ The relentless pace never lets up online.



↑ Watching the crashes is painfully good fun.

The Verdict

A top Live-enabled racer. Fun and frantic on all levels, but could have benefited from more game modes.

4/5

Masterclass: Halo 2

Think you're the best Halo 2 player in town but cried like a baby when you fired up Legendary mode? Don't fret - allow us to point out the way forward so you can concentrate on killing lots and lots of alien scum!

WE'VE ALL DREAMT of this day for two years, and now it's finally here. *Halo 2* plunges you back into the thick of the war between the human race and the Covenant. To navigate its plot twists and survive its fiercest firefights, you need nerves of steel and lightning reflexes... and this guide probably won't hurt.

ONE SIZE FITS ALL

It's tutorial time. Get used to the new HUD before you get on the lift.

HOME FIELD ADVANTAGE

Follow the soldiers downstairs for weapons, then head over to the hangar bay. Focus fire on the exploding bulkhead to mow down the Covenant as they appear, then use that hole to advance. Hang a right, go upstairs, and use the turret to help clear the plaza. Now venture forth into it to return to the hangar bays.

The Covenant will spawn from their boarding ships, so greet them as they arrive. Unfortunately, they've got the high ground in the next hangar over. Let the Marines draw fire while you stick plasma grenades to their turrets.

PRIORITY SHIFT

Go down one of the ramps in the hangar floor to fight a squad of Grunts and their cloaked Elite leader. Once they're down, play follow-the-alien-gunfire back through the armoury and another plaza to find Johnson and Keyes. Help them with their Covenant problem, then head past their position to the airlock.

AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY

Be prepared - this will be your first encounter with flying Elites, who are best dealt with from a considerable distance. Head out into space, drop down, and fight past the shipping containers to reach another airlock. Inside, you'll face an infestation of Buggers (the new airborne insectoids), which are annoying; wait till they stop moving, then step out from behind your cover and waste them. When the lift arrives, find high ground and knock out its complement of Grunts and Elites.

Ride the lift down, enter the airlock and use it for cover against the space Elite. Now wait for the area to rise into position, then leap across it to find an airlock on the other side.



↑ It makes you an obvious target, but turrets are extremely powerful.



↑ You will grow to hate these things insects known as Buggers. They can be a real pest.

RETURN TO SENDER

Use grenades to thin out the crowd of guards around the bomb. You can duck left underneath the platform to draw the Covenant after you, or run up onto the balcony for the high ground.

THEY'LL REGRET THAT TOO

Follow the soldiers and clear out the wrecked building. From its second floor, neutralise the Covenant that come out of the alleyways.

When Johnson mentions putting a satchel on a gate, grab the turret and watch for a pair of Hunters to punch their way in. Play your cards right, and you can knock 'em down from here without a problem.

Use their gate to progress. The back alleys are full of Jackal snipers, so steal a Beam Rifle from one of them and retaliate in kind. Your goal is the wrecked hotel where the other Marines crashed; fortunately, it's under siege, so it's easy to find. Fight through it to the oceanfront, but watch for a pair of Ghosts that'll arrive from under the bridge.

A DAY AT THE BEACH

Hijack a Ghost and back up the Warthog. The first Covenant fortification is easy to get past, but the second's tricky, as it's infested with Ghosts and snipers. The secret is to get into the wrecked building; there's a rocket launcher on its roof. Use it and a Beam Rifle to depopulate the Covenant guards around the highway tunnel entrance.

SPEED ZONE

First of all, make sure you have got a vehicle, or this will be a very long trip. It's mostly a chase



↑ This is a Phantom. When it appears, hide, or shoot its cannons off.

FIRE IN THE HOLE!

Grunts and Buggers will freak out when there's a grenade stuck to them. Elites and Brutes, on the other hand, will charge you. Keep this in mind.

THE RIGHT TOOLS

Press X in front of an ally to trade weapons with him. This lets you equip Marines with more dangerous hardware than their SMGs or rifles.

WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?

Your crosshair will turn yellow when it's pointed at a friendly target. Watch out for that, especially when playing as the Arbiter.

scene, but watch out for the Shadows; they can't be stolen and they have plasma turrets. It's important to try to keep your buddies in the Warthog alive for this one.

LADIES LIKE ARMOR-PLATING

Crush. Kill. Destroy. Ghosts are as nothing, and Wraiths will always miss as long as you just keep moving forward. The Phantom dropships may give you problems, but you can blow off their cannons if you're quick on the draw.

When you reach the city proper, it's time for another wave of Ghosts, followed by Banshees and Wraiths, but you've got them outgunned. At the end of the line, grab the shotgun and lead your crew past the barricade.

THIS TOWN AIN'T BIG ENOUGH FOR THE BOTH OF US

Knock out the Jackal, steal his Beam Rifle, and take out the aliens on the platform ahead of you. Use their plasma turrets to help out the Warthog, then man its turret. This is, unusually, a grenade launcher, which helps against the Wraiths and Ghosts in the clearing beyond; if the Warthog gets aced, retreat to the barricade and grab a rocket launcher from the dead soldier.

If you're on foot, grab yourself a Ghost, then head into the city streets. Once you're sure the



↑ High firepower, meet low intellect. Mindless violence is a beautiful thing.



↑ A good technique is to always seek and hold the high ground.



↑ He's blunt, but he has a point.

streets are clear of Ghosts and Wraiths, head into the Marine outpost.

FIELD EXPEDIENT

Go upstairs, tool up from the Marines' ammo cache, and jump onto the Scarab's back. Use explosives to dismantle the Covenant as they surge up out of the cockpit; a rocket launcher works well here, as do grenades or twin plasma rifles.

A WHISPER IN THE STORM

This isn't an easy level, so stick with your group. Stealth, secrecy and dirty tricks are your best advantages. Grab a Covenant Carbine as soon as you can. Use stealth and your crew to get past the first two groups of guards, then ride the lift down. Cloak and sneak over to the hangar doors' activation switch, on the wall to their left. Let your reinforcements do most of the work, then fight your way downstairs using the ramps on the lower level.

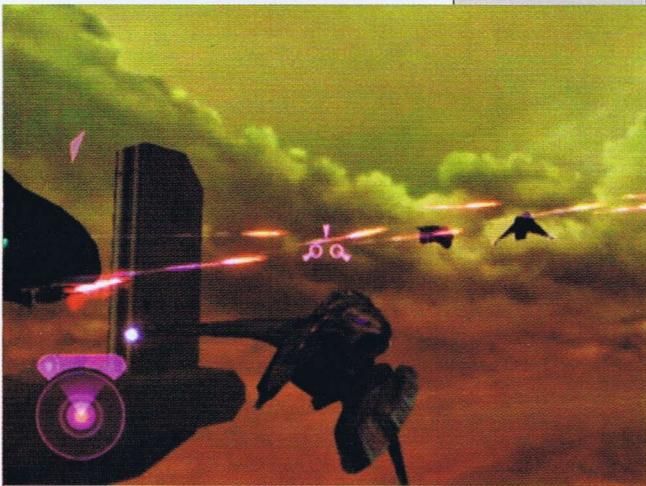
TO THE HUNT

Grab a Banshee and stay close to the Phantom. It's in no real danger, so let it point you towards the enemy. Once you find your landing zone, drop a bomb or two in order to clear it and then head inside.

JUGGERNAUT

The fun starts once the hologram disappears. Your best weapons against the Flood are the Thrust Beam or an Energy Sword; they also completely ignore grenades, which is handy.

Enter the lift and stay mobile. If you can stand to, ignore the laser drones, as they'll shoot the Flood as much as, or more than, they shoot you. Also, try to stay as close as you can to the centre of the platform, as the Flood like to try to knock you off the lift. At the bottom floor, blow out one of the



↑ The Phantom doesn't really need your help.

CLOAK AND DAGGER Hide and seek out the enemy



A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

Your CPU allies, such as Marines and Covenant, are more useful than you think. Equip them with sniper rifles or rocket launchers to really get the most use out of them.

lab windows and do some damage. You will need to wipe out several alternating waves of Heretics and Flood before you can progress; you'll know you're done when you can actually leave the damned room!

Let the Phantom provide you with cover as you fight along the exterior walkway. Once you're back inside, you will find a three-way crossfire between droids, Flood, and your troops. Take the Flood out first of all and, post-cutscene, head up the ramp. Start the lift.

HEY, WATCH THIS!

You don't have the firepower to take the Flood on, so cloak when needed and run for it. The three cables you need to cut are at the corners of the balcony; slice them and go back down the lift straight away.

Return to the Heretic's hideyhole, take out his rear guard and jump down the shaft. On your way down, acquire a fresh energy blade, then chase the Heretic in a Banshee. Don't bother with any dogfights; just get after him.



↑ This is a cable. Cut it. It'll be funny.

DEAD OR ALIVE... ACTUALLY, JUST DEAD

You're back where you found your first Banshee. Ignore the fighting as best you can and retrace your steps to the hangar bay.

The Heretic's dual plasma rifles will cut you in half if you're not careful. Stay out of his sight, wait for one of his holograms to come down to ground level, and slash it to 'death' from behind.

HELLJUMPERS

Use rockets to knock out the two plasma turrets, then seize the building. Phantoms will drop two fresh groups of Covenant before the Pelican brings you a Warthog.

Ride it to the bridge control room's entrance, then toss a few grenades in through the hole in its roof. Once the area's secure and the bridge is down, you'll receive a Scorpion.

YOU BREAK IT, YOU BUY IT

This is a quick, linear tank level, with all that that implies. Since most of your enemies are in



↑ You're usually a better gunner than Marines.

Monsters

GRUNTS

You shouldn't discount the Grunts. Admittedly they are easy to kill, but late in the game, they're given serious hardware like fuel rod cannons.

JACKALS

Target the notch in their energy shields to stagger them, leaving them vulnerable for the finishing blow. The snipers are far more dangerous; if one's around, stay behind cover and carefully pick it off.



ELITES

The ones you have to watch out for are the ones carrying energy swords; these have an odd knack for backstabs.

HUNTERS

The only weak spot on a Hunter is the small wiry bit on their waists where their armour gaps, but that's hard to reach unless their back is turned. If you're alone, use up your grenades and circle-strafe; if Marines are around, let them distract the Hunters while you go in for the kill.

BUGGERS

You've got two choices. One is to grab dual automatics, yell something about the end of the world, and fill the sky with lead; the other is to hide behind cover, wait for a Bugger to land, and pick it off. The option you choose will depend on your weapon.

BRUTES

For creatures without shield generators, Brutes are incredibly durable. Needlers will take them out relatively painlessly, as will a single plasma grenade or up to two headshots. The Arbitrator's better off hitting them from behind, while the Master Chief should opt for dual needlers.

FLOOD

They're easy to kill... and despite their relatively low threat level, they should be killed. The Flood can animate dead bodies in the area, including aliens you just got done shooting.

FLOOD ZOMBIES

Unless you're talented or downright insane, don't enter melee with a zombie. An energy sword will vapourise one, but its clublike arms can beat you to death in a hit or two. The shotgun works very well on them, as do the Sentinel Beams dropped by fallen drones.



↑ This is what it feels like to be Godzilla.

OFF THE ROCK, THROUGH THE BUSH, NOTHING BUT JACKAL

You'll wind up behind a sniper. Take his Beam Rifle and do horrible things to the Covenant below you. Whatever you do, Buggers and Jackals will arrive once you reach the ground, so be ready for them. Your goal is the cave at the back of the valley.

Resupply from the ammo cache, then snipe as many aliens as you can before entering the temple. This'll stir up a nest of Buggers, which can be tricky to deal with. We like to take cover back in the valley, and let them come to us.

The inner sanctum is watched by a cadre of Honor Guards, which are absolutely lethal in melee. Don't let them get that close. Three quick shots with a Beam Rifle will take one out.

TESTAMENT

Fight through the temple's defenders to the platform launch. When the rest of the local guards are dead, a Phantom will drop off two Hunters. You can kill them using the dead Jackals' Beam Rifles, or plasma grenades affixed to their weak points. This will occasion the arrival of the ferry, along with its inhabitants: more aliens. Take them out and activate the lift.

ONE-WAY TICKET

Bring a sniper rifle. You'll have to contend with the guards at the gondola's halfway station, which includes a few Buggers; after that, it's a good idea to snipe the aliens at your arrival point.

Break in and ride the lift down. You'll encounter a couple of Honor Guard and Hunters down here, so keep a Beam Rifle and plenty of grenades on hand. The last passage before the second lift is full of cloaked Elites with swords, but some sniper fire from the entrance will often do the trick.

When you next see daylight, it will be accompanied by an ambush. Poke your head out to rifle 'em up, then retreat and pick them off from the doorway. The second gondola's dock is full of guards, but you'll receive reinforcements en route.



↑ Live by the sword, get shot by those who don't.



↑ A Hunter's orange midsection is its only weak spot.



↑ Hold the Right trigger to lock on a rocket.

THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY

Caught in a civil war? In order of priority, target the Flood, the Brutes, sentry drones, and finally the Covenant.

SILENT SCOPE

The Combat Rifle, Covenant Carbine, rocket launcher, and fuel rod cannon are all equipped with 2X scopes.

DUAL-WIELDING

With a gun in each hand, you can't throw grenades or use your melee attack. To drop your second gun, press the B or Y buttons.

Before you get onto the platform, grab yourself a rocket launcher. You'll need it to dispose of a couple of Banshees. Once they're taken care of, swap the RPG for something automatic, the better to deal with the flying Elites who are next in line. The temple's final exterior defence is manned by Jackals and Grunts, which are easy prey for sniper fire as you get close.

SORRY, WERE YOU IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING?

Defeat the Honor Guards and Grunts in the front hall. When you see the Prophet, run up to his podium, hit X to jump onto it, and punch him to death. Scene!

UNCOMFORTABLE SILENCE

The large square grey thing is a Piston. Activate them to drop down to the next level.

This will be easy until you reach the shield generator. The large robot in the room can only be defeated by firing at its unprotected bottom or sides, but you needn't bother. Wait for it to lose interest, then cloak and activate the four plug locks at the corners of the room. Now retreat to safety, cloak again, and use the console.

BUYER'S REMORSE

When your platform lands, don't destroy the drones until the Flood have been killed. Once they're gone, you can enter the Library complex. This is the fun part. Use your cloaking device and

MOVING VEHICLES Lock out the Covenant



judicious assassination to advance through the halls while avoiding confrontation whenever you can. Let the drones do most of the work for you. If you need to fight, use weapons like the shotgun or Sentinel Beams. Don't try to sneak past the exploding Flood; instead, cap them at range so their explosion takes out any nearby zombies.

100,000 YEARS WAR

...and now, pitched warfare! Fight the Flood off and get to the Covenant campsite. Don't bother manning a turret; just stay mobile and alive until the Phantom arrives.

OBJECTS IN MIRROR ARE LARGER THAN THEY APPEAR

This is about to get serious. Jump into the Spectre's turret, but be prepared to abandon it at a moment's notice. There's going to be a lot of firepower flying around, from both friend and foe, and the casualty rate's going to be high.

The Flood have captured a Scorpion, which you'll run into near the back of the first building. Destroy it or hijack it; it's too dangerous to leave

alone. Whatever you do, make sure you're not on foot when you leave this area.

HEALTHY COMPETITION

Watch out for the shield robots, which can pick up vehicles, and the Flood carjackers on foot. Don't stand still, and if you've got to grab a slow vehicle, make sure everything around it is good and dead first. The hills are lined with tanks, Ghosts, rocket snipers, and shield robots, all of which are firing at each other and you.

The Scorpion helps here, as you can easily take out distant targets with its main gun; the same applies for the Wraith and its plasma caster. Before you venture into a new area, be sure to sanitise it with plentiful vehicle firepower.

When you reach the burning cavern, look for a small footpath. Through here, you'll find that stealth has again become your friend, as the Flood and the robots are more interested in each other than in you. Don't fire a shot; just cloak and run whenever you can.

You'll eventually find a clearing guarded by a Wraith. You've just found your ride. Steal it and

DAVID VERSUS GOLIATH

Taking out an enemy vehicle is a very dangerous proposition. Plasma grenades work well, but using a turret will usually get you killed. It's easiest to hijack a tank. For smaller vehicles, try a rocket launcher, fuel rod cannon, or aimed fire against the driver.

HONG KONG RULES

A critically damaged vehicle will burn for a moment before going supercritical, exploding and throwing parts everywhere. If there are enemies clustered around a parked Ghost or Warthog, blow it up to send them flying.



↑ There's no reason to fight if you don't have to.



↑ Hijacking tanks is easier than you'd think.



↑ "Don't get up. I'll show myself out."

drive it straight up the hill to receive some backup. You might be better off in the Spectre's turret than in the Wraith, given the latter's anaemic landspeed. Whatever you decide, your goal is the large building on your right. See the Flood firing machine-gun turrets at you? Yeah, that building.

SHOOTING GALLERY

Flood will come pouring onto the gondola. Stick to your backup and fight them off.

THAT OLD, FAMILIAR FEELING

Just follow the bodies.

INSIDE JOB

Drop Cortana into the system, and she'll helpfully lock every path but the one you need to take. Equip yourself with dual needlers (for Brutes) and a Beam Rifle (for everything else).

When you reach the prison block, ditch your second gun and get sneaky. If you play your cards right, you can clear out most of the area without raising an alarm by holding down the Left thumbstick and using your melee attack. Once you free the first group of Marines, though, all bets are off. After that, move fast, free the second batch, equip them with Beam Rifles, and get ready for some serious run and gun.

Go back the way you came and take point. You'll want to dispose of berserk Brutes and Honor Guards before they can wade into your Marines. This will be difficult at first, but things are about to get interesting.

There are a lot of potentially devastating firefights ahead, but the fun part is that you don't actually have to participate in most of them. This is the Brutes versus the Elite, with you as a relatively innocent bystander. Stay back, let them wear each other out, and take out the survivors.

If you find a fuel rod cannon, keep it handy. When Cortana mentions a shortcut through the mausoleum, you'll be in a long hallway with a major Covenant force at the other end, including a pair of Hunters. Use fuel rods to wipe out the Hunters while they're still grouped up with the other aliens. In the next room, take Cortana's advice ➤



↑ Against Brutes, there's no such thing as overkill.

» and just sit there for about five minutes while the Brutes and Covenant tear each other apart.

OH, SO THAT'S HOW IT IS

Grab an energy sword as soon as possible. The Arbiter's better off stabbing Brutes in the back than trying to take them on directly. Stealthily kill your way up the hill, and join your Covenant allies. Let them take the brunt of the assault; their love of melee combat prevents you from using high explosives, so either let them let you avoid fighting, or participate with well-timed backstabs.

STEP ASIDE, LET THE MAN GO THROUGH

This valley is rich with ambushes. Grab a fuel rod cannon as you leave the building, grab a Ghost, and make a mad run at the first Brute encampment; victory here depends on getting them out from behind their cover, which is much easier if you've got some backup. If not, blow up their Ghosts before they can use them, kill their sniper, and flush them out with grenades.

Drive a Ghost to the second choke point. Here, kill the Jackal on the left hill before he can take out the friendly Grunts, then drive around the right hill and run down the Brutes and Jackals atop it. Use plasma fire to clear the rest out, and finally, take on the enemy Spectre. It's easier said than done, but it's really the easiest way to proceed.

You can bulldog down the rest of the ravine in a Ghost or Spectre if you want, but the local infantry is easy enough to beat if you're in a vehicle.



↑ Equip Marines with beam rifles for serious backup.



↑ Clearly, the Brutes have not seen Predator.

FIGHT CLUB

Use one of the Jackals' rifles to pick off a couple of Brutes that are lurking across the crevasse, then get a decent running start and ramp the lake. If you play this safe, you'll get smoked by either Brute grenadiers, Jackal snipers, or the Wraith below you; the only way you're going to survive is by getting a little crazy.

Crash your Ghost, grab a shotgun, and get into the building as fast as you can. There's a weapons dump in here; grab the rocket launcher and a shotgun. The latter's great against Brutes, while the former can be used to great effect against the Ghosts you're about to fight.

CROSS-PURPOSES

Ditch your lame Covenant weapons in favour of a shotgun or energy sword. Again, Cortana will show you the way to go.

Go up the lift and knock out the Buggers first thing; fortunately for you, they're pretty distracted by the Flood. Take the two gravlifts around the left side of the chamber and get back into the hallways. From here, make a run for it, only killing anything that's unfortunate enough to get directly in your path. Your target in this instance is the lift in the Prophet's sanctum.

SANCTIFIED

Kill your torch as you come up the lift and play it like a ninja. The Flood will arrive shortly to provide a distraction. Let them do it, and head for the gravlift opposite your entry point.



↑ This is what the Flood call a grenade.



↑ With ground targets, fire the plasma caster low.

DECLOAKING

While you're using the Arbiter's cloaking device, you can change weapons, hit switches, and (most importantly) let your shields recharge without becoming visible. Attacking, throwing a grenade, picking up a new weapon, getting hit, or reloading will deactivate the cloak.

ONCE MORE, WITH FEELING

Use everything you've got to get through this room: grenades, rockets, shotgun blasts, an energy sword, whatever. You have no need to conserve ammo. Just get to Cortana.

YOUR ASS, MY SIZE-24 HOOF

Use your new Wraith to destroy the ground forces. The complicated part comes at the end, when a Phantom arrives; it's best to wait it out from behind cover.

When you enter the control complex, you'll acquire Hunters as backup. They're pretty stupid, but they make a great distraction. Let them draw fire while you sneak around and engage the enemy from behind.

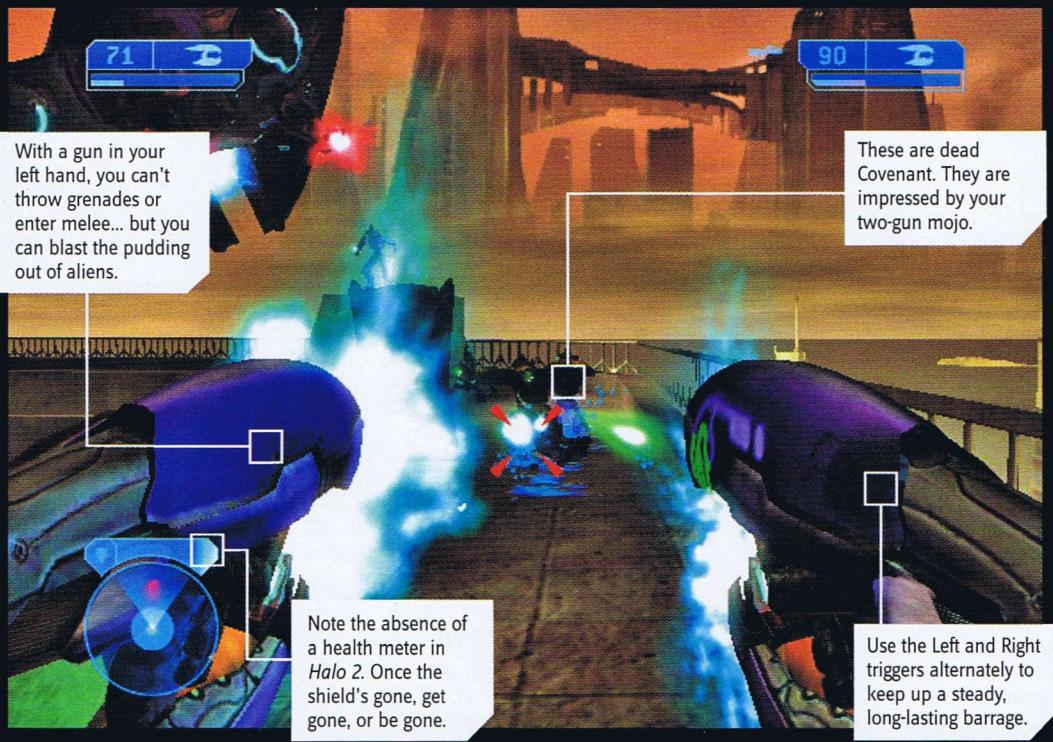
With their assistance, blast through the Brutes' encampment to the alley full of snipers next door. But watch out; there are Buggers waiting at the other end, with a Phantom ready to provide close air support.

You'll find a detention facility at the end of the alley. Instead of fighting the Brutes yourself, destroy the forcefield generators to free the Covenant prisoners. They'll stick with you through the next



↑ Silly Brutes, bringing guns to a Ghost fight.

TWO-GUN MOJO Two guns are just better. Fact!



↑ Enemy Banshees are weak, but fast.

room, where you'll also get help from a few human Marines... and a surprise guest.

BACKSEAT DRIVER

Grab a Banshee and take out the turrets on the canyon wall. The Scarab isn't really in danger; let it take point. Keep your Banshee in one piece.

DELUSIONS AND GRANDEUR

Fly up to the door Johnson blasted open to find the hardest fight in the game: you versus five Brutes, two of which will go berserk the moment they enter the room. Once they appear, knock a couple out with plasma grenades, then retreat to the entrance and pick them off with sniper fire. You can also play cat-and-mouse with your cloaking device and the ductwork in the floor, but you can't afford a single mistake.

Once you've won through them, you've got one challenge left: Tartarus. Jump after him and let the Elite take him on. One shot from his hammer will kill you, but you can use your cloaking device or the gravlift to escape. Keep hammering him with plasma fire; when his shield drops, he's vulnerable. His death ends the Campaign mode of *Halo 2*.



↑ Cloak, sneak around back, and let them have it.



↑ Tartarus's shield is tough, but it's not impenetrable.

Vehicles

WARTHOG

More of a free ride than an actual tactical option, Warthogs tend to get blown up in a relative hurry. You're better off in the turret than in the driver's seat, so you can perforate Covenant en route to wherever you're supposed to go. Just be ready to bail out if and when things go south.



GHOST

Cheap, fast and dangerous, Ghosts are easy to come by and easy to lose. They can be a lot of fun, but they come with a risk. Don't stand still around ground troops, and blast enemies instead of running them down.

SCORPION

When you have the chance to get one, use it. They're a liability in pitched melees – everyone wants to fire at the tank – but their range and power are second to none. Don't neglect the alt-fire machine-gun; it can rapidly dismantle foot soldiers and Ghosts.

WRAITH

They're slow and a bit weak, but the Wraith's plasma caster allows for several unique strategies. As artillery, you can fire it in a long arc to reach distant targets with remarkable accuracy; if you aim at the ground, it's devastating against enemies and vehicles in your immediate area.

SPECTRE

The Covenant version of the Warthog. Its biggest problem is that it never shows up anywhere where you can use it to its fullest advantage; in a stage with an available Spectre, you're usually better off in a Ghost.



BANSHEE

Practice strafing runs. The Banshee is a bit slow and it doesn't have the punch of a ground vehicle, but when it shows up, you need it to advance. Practice your flying skills on In the Hunt until they're second nature.

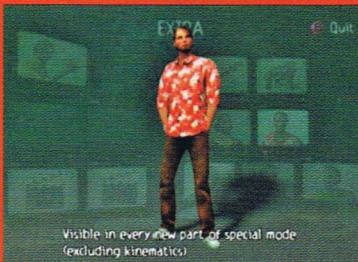
Hints & Cheats

This is the only place you need for all your freshest codes and unlockable extras for the latest Xbox titles. You should never be stuck on a game again!

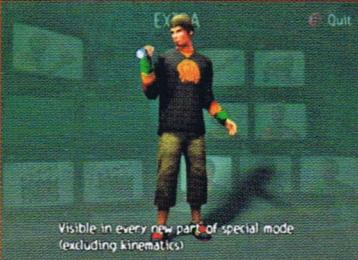
CHEATS IN MOTION

OBSCURE Issue 34, Score: 7.8

Go to the bonus features menu once you've completed the game to access these...



↑ **UNLOCK NEW OUTFIT FOR JOSH:**
Complete the game with Josh still alive.



↑ **UNLOCK NEW OUTFIT FOR STAN:**
Complete the game with Stan still alive.



↑ **UNLOCK NEW OUTFIT FOR SHANNON:**
Complete the game with Shannon still alive.



↑ **UNLOCK NEW OUTFIT FOR KENNY:**
Complete the game with Kenny still alive.

DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NEW YORK

Issue 34, 8.9

Enter the following codes at the cheats menu:

100 reward points: DUCKETS
100 reward points: CROOKLYN
100 reward points: THESOURCE
100 reward points: GETSTUFF
100 reward points: NEWJACK
Afterhours - Nyne: LOYALTY
Anything Goes - CNN: MILITAIN
Bust - Outkast: BIGBOI
Chopshop - Baxter: CHOPPER
Comp - Comp: CHOCOCITY
Dragon House - Chiang: AKIRA
Get it Now - Bless: PLATINUMB
Koto - Chiang: GHOSTSHELL
Lil' Bro - Ric-o-che: GONBTRUBL
Man Up - Sticky Fingaz: KIRKJONES
Move - Public Enemy: RESPECT
Original Gangster - Ice T: POWER
Poppa Large - Ultramagnetic MCs: ULTRAMAG
Seize the day - Bless: SEIZE
Take a look at my life - Fat Joe: CARTAGENA
Walk with me - Joe Budden: PUMP

OBSCURE

Issue 34, 7.8

Unlock making of Obscure, all music, Special mode, Span music video and Sum 41 music video: Complete the game.

Unlock new outfit for Ashley: Complete the game with Ashley still alive.

Unlock Morgenstern bat and the laser gun: Complete the game and play Special mode.

TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2

Issue 34, 7.5

Enter the following codes at the cheats menu:

Infinite rail/lip balance: straightedge
Unlock Natas Kaupas: oldskool
Unlock Paulie: 4wheeler

X-MEN LEGENDS

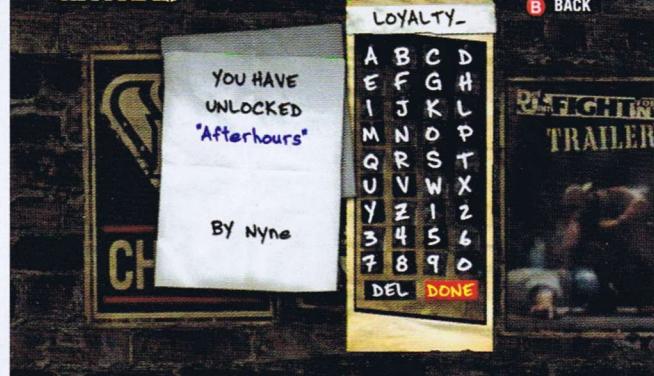
Issue 33, 8.5

X-treme costumes: At the main menu, enter Up, Up, Right, Left, Down, Down, Start



↑ **X-Men Legends: get X-treme costumes!**

EXTRAS



↑ **Def Jam Fight For New York:** new beats for your jukebox.

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005

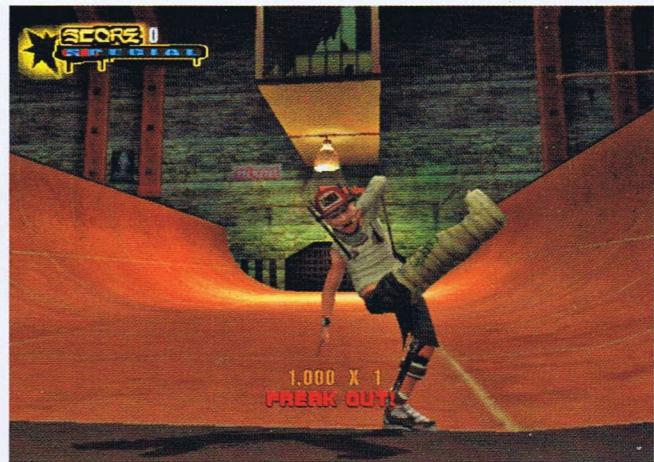
Issue 33, 8.7

Enter the following codes at the codes menu to unlock extra courses, golfers and items:

The City Rooftops Skill Zone: NIGHTGOLFER
Adidas items: 91treSTR
Callaway items: cgTR78qw
Cleveland items: CL45etUB
Maxfli items: FDGH597i
Nike items: YJHk342B
Odyssey items: kjnMR3qv
Ping items: R453DrTe
Precept items: BRi3498Z
TAG items: cDsa2fgY
Tourstage items: TS345329
Tiffany Williamson: RICHGIRL
Jeb 'Shooter' McGraw: SIXSHOOTER
Hunter 'Steelhead' Elmore: GREENCOLAR
Alastair 'Captain' McFadden: NICESOCKS
Bev 'Boomer' Bouchier: THEBEEHIVE
Adriana 'Sugar' Dulce: SOSWEET
Aphrodite Papadopoulos: TEMPTING
Billy 'Bear' hightower: TOOTALL
Kendra 'Spike' Lovette: ENGLISHPUNK
Dion 'Double D' Douglas: DDOUGLAS
Raquel 'Rocky' Rogers: DOUBLER
Bunjiro 'Bud' Tanaka: INTHEFAMILY
Cesar 'The Emperor' Rosado: LANDOWNER
Reginald Weathers: REGGIE
Justin 'The Hustler' Timberlake: ALTEREGO
Sunday Tiger Woods: NEWLEGEND
Ben Hogan: PUREGOLF
Seve Ballesteros: THEMAGICIAN
All courses unlocked: THEWORLDISYOURS



↑ **Obscure:** the Morgenstern bat can be picked up on your second playthrough.



↑ **THUG2:** freak out with Paulie.

10-minute Masterclass

10 cool things to do in Fable before you're old and grey!

FABLE (Issue 32, 9.7) has hundreds of hidden secrets, so many that we'd need an entire magazine to list them all. This month, we've been replaying this gorgeous adventure to reveal some of the coolest tricks. If you've discovered any more secrets or glitches, why not send them in to us to feature in

the magazine? The character you see in the grabs below was created by Ben Lawrence and that explains why he looks like such a big wimp. If you have a better looking character, we want to see him. Send your screen grabs and photos to staff@oxm.com.au.



BEAT YOUR WIFE FOR STAT POINTS

Only evil players should apply. Trap your wife in a corner and punch her in a continuous combo. You'll earn exp points and evil points. This doesn't work against husbands because they can block.



FAST TRACK FOR EVIL POINTS

Eat 12 Crunchy Chicks instead of killing four innocent people in front of the Demon Door in Great Wood Gorge. It's a much easier way of getting the 50 evil points you need to impress him.



CHEAT AT THE TAVERN GAMES

In any town where Will powers are allowed, use the Slow Time spell to simplify tavern games. You can make the maximum bets with almost no risk of losing. If you get drunk, the games get harder.



DIG UP TWO DIFFERENT FRYING PANS

Get hold of all six Treasure clues before you dig up the Frying Pan, Albion's most dangerous utensil. If you don't find all of the clues you just get an ordinary frying pan that is useless as a weapon.



FIND A WEAPON WORTHY OF A GOD

Donating cash at the Temple of Avo gets you the Sentinus Great Mace. The amount varies: you need 32,000 Gold if you are evil, 64,000 Gold if you are a bit good, or 320,000 Gold if you are an angel.



PLAY CHICKEN KEEP-UPS

For a massive distance on your chicken kick, max out your Slow Time spell. Cast it before booting the fowl then run and boot it in mid-air. If you're too strong you won't reach it. This works with heads too!



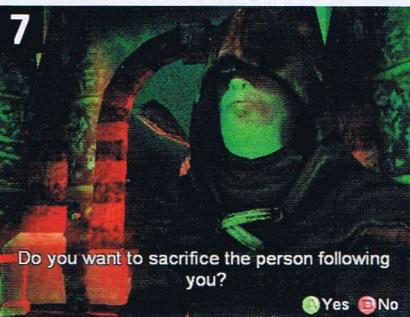
GATHER A HUNDRED FOLLOWERS

When you're on the stage taking a boast, run down and dig a hole in a soft area of ground. Each time you do, five or six villagers will appear. You can gather about 100 followers before the game crashes. It's a great way to max out your trophy points.



PAY HEED TO THE STATUE MASTER

Follow the turning of the Statue Master in Lookout Point - it can open secret doors. When it points to Bowerstone, the Bowerstone South Cellar opens; a chest appears when it points to Greatwood.



DO YOU WANT TO SACRIFICE THE PERSON FOLLOWING YOU?

Yes No

MAKE A KILLING AT SKORM'S PLACE

Sacrificing the right person at the Chapel of Skorm at the right time reaps a big reward. Sacrifice the bodyguard from Twinblade's Camp on the 7th day between 23:00 and 23:59 - see what happens!



FLIP THE ELECTROCUTING FINGER

Once you're a high-level hero, you'll learn the finger-pointing expression. Execute this move and perform lightning at the same time. You'll see the beam zap right out of your index finger!



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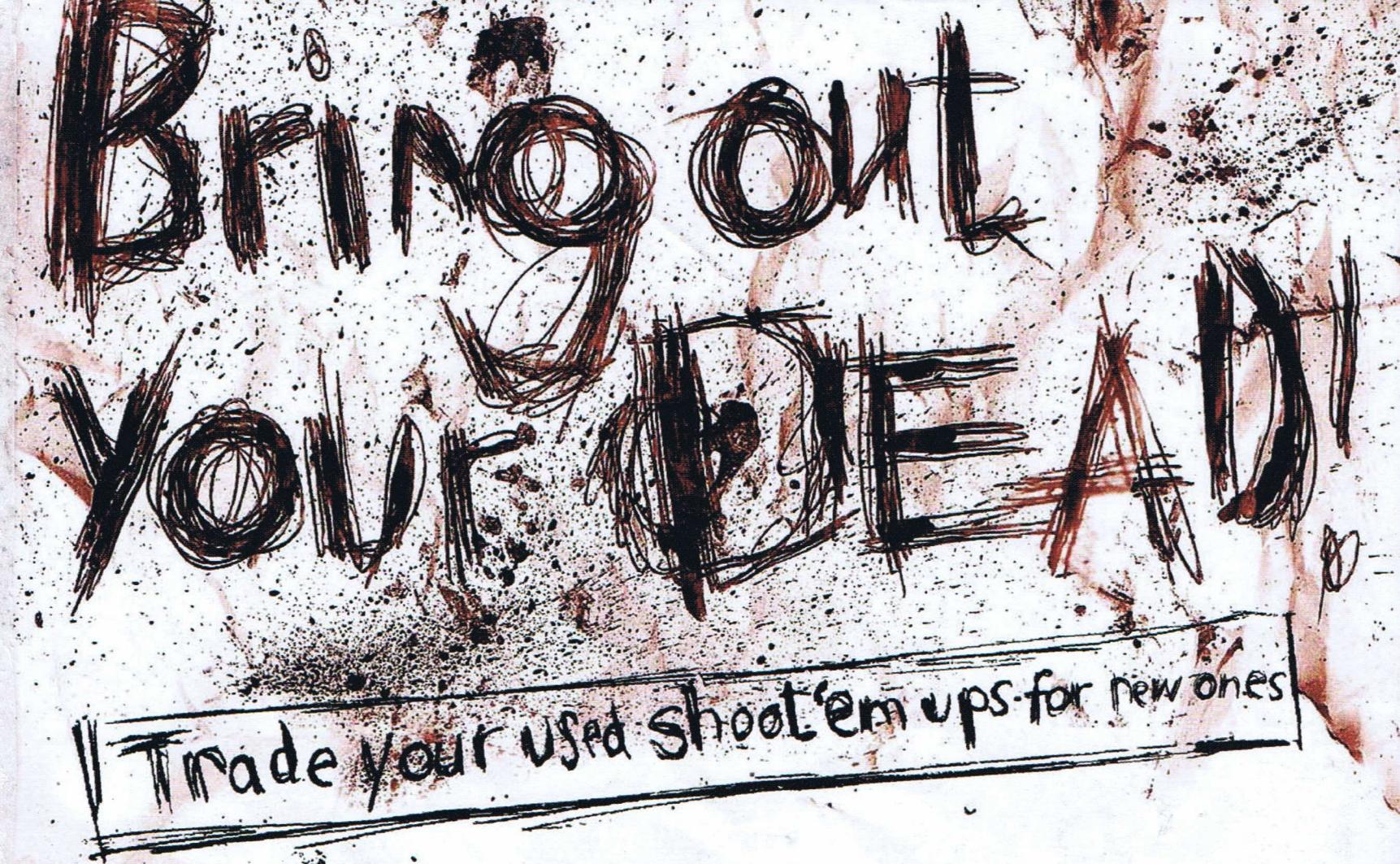
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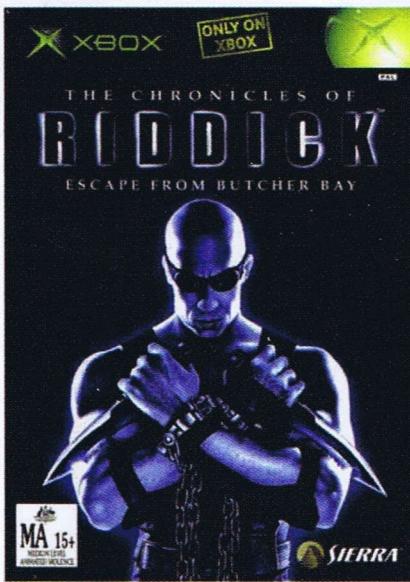
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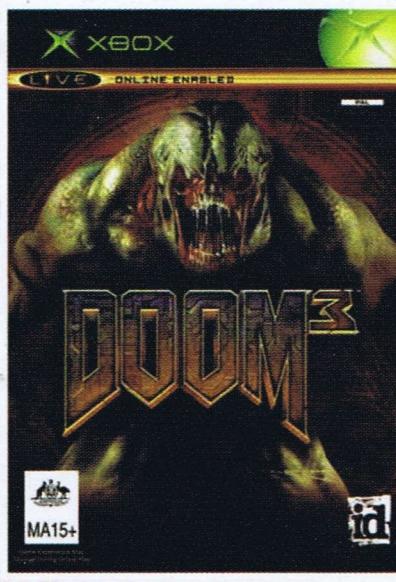
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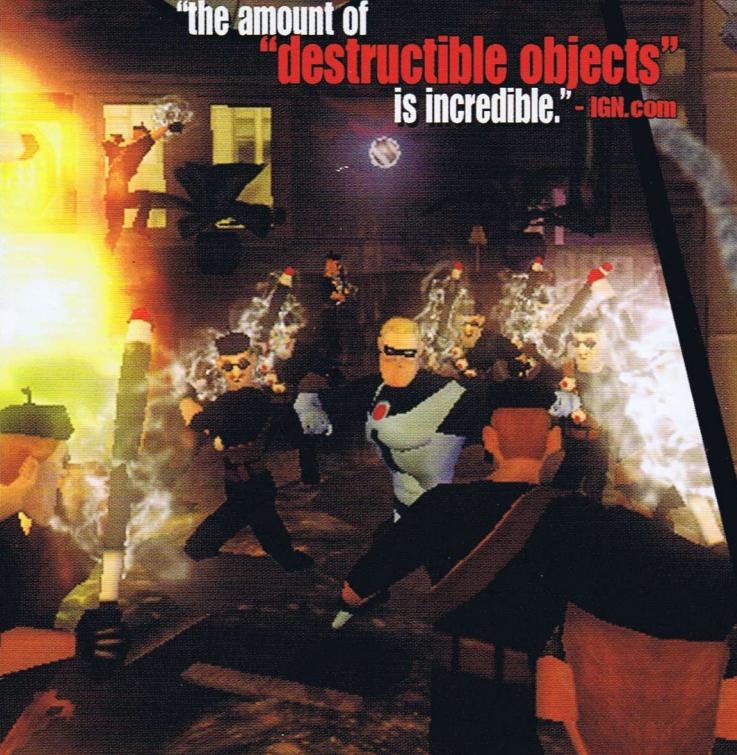
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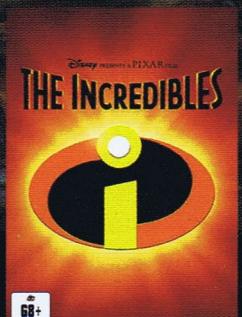
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